Minority Rights Group International

REPORT

The Chinese of South-East Asia

BY CHIN UNG HO

MRG

AN MRG INTERNATIONAL REPORT • THE CHINESE OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

THE CHINESE OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL

MRG works to secure rights and justice for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. It is dedicated to the cause of cooperation and understanding between communities.

Founded in the 1960s, MRG is a small international non-governmental organization that informs and warns governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and the wider public about the situation of minorities around the world. This work is based on the publication of well-researched Reports, Books and Papers; direct advocacy on behalf of minority rights in international fora; the development of a global network of like-minded organizations and minority communities to collaborate on these issues; and **the challenging of prejudice and promotion of public understanding** through information and education projects.

MRG believes that the best hope for a peaceful world lies in **identifying and monitoring conflict** between communities, **advocating preventive measures** to avoid the escalation of conflict and **encouraging positive action** to build trust between majority and minority communities.

MRG has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and has a worldwide network of partners. Its international headquarters are in London. Legally it is registered both as a charity and as a limited company under English law with an International Governing Council.

THE PROCESS

As part of its methodology, MRG conducts regional research, identifies issues and commissions Reports based on its findings. Each author is carefully chosen and all scripts are read by no less than eight independent experts who are knowledgeable about the subject matter. These experts are drawn from the minorities about whom the Reports are written, and from journalists, academics, researchers and other human rights agencies. Authors are asked to incorporate comments made by these parties. In this way, MRG aims to publish accurate, authoritative, well-balanced Reports.

Chinese boy, Malaysia
TRYGVE BOLSTAD/PANOS PICTURES

The Chinese of South-East Asia

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BY CHIN UNG HO

MRG

Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities

(Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992)

Article 1

1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

Article 2

1. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.
3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.
4. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations.
5. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group and with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.

Article 3

1. Persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights, including those set forth in the present Declaration, individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination.
2. No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority as the consequence of the exercise or non-exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration.

Article 4

1. States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.
2. States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards.
3. States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.
4. States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.
5. States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.

Article 5

1. National policies and programmes shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.
2. Programmes of cooperation and assistance among States should be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.

Article 6

States should cooperate on questions relating to persons belonging to minorities, inter alia, exchanging information and experiences, in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence.

Article 7

States should cooperate in order to promote respect for the rights set forth in the present Declaration.

Article 8

1. Nothing in the present Declaration shall prevent the fulfilment of international obligations of States in relation to persons belonging to minorities. In particular, States shall fulfil in good faith the obligations and commitments they have assumed under international treaties and agreements to which they are parties.
2. The exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration shall not prejudice the enjoyment by all persons of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. Measures taken by States to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights set forth in the present Declaration shall not prima facie be considered contrary to the principle of equality contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
4. Nothing in the present Declaration may be construed as permitting any activity contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Article 9

The specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system shall contribute to the full realization of the rights and principles set forth in the present Declaration, within their respective fields of competence.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(Adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966)

Article 26

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 27

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

(Adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989)

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own;
(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Preface

Numbering perhaps 25 million people, the ethnic Chinese of South-East Asia are among the world's most significant diasporas. With an economic influence far exceeding their numbers, they have lived in the region for many generations, especially since the large-scale migrations encouraged by colonial governments in the early nineteenth century. While in some countries ethnic Chinese and host communities have integrated successfully with each other, in others political leaders have tended to exclude ethnic Chinese from public life or to demand their complete assimilation – both approaches involving the denial of minority rights. On occasion, official policies have also fanned the flames of popular prejudice even to the extent of promoting violent anti-Chinese racism.

In times of economic, political and social turmoil, the Chinese of South-East Asia have been made to serve as scapegoats. The most appalling recent case was the anti-Chinese rioting, rapes and killings that took place in Indonesia in May 1998, linked to the economic downturn resulting from the 1997–8 Asian currency crisis. Evidence indicates that much of this violence – which also targeted other minorities besides the Chinese – was instigated by the Indonesian military. These deeply regrettable events were perhaps exceptional but not unprecedented. And while political prospects in Indonesia have since become more favourable, the situation of Chinese in many countries of the region remains uncertain and often vulnerable.

MRG published its first report on Chinese communities of South-East Asia in 1972, and twenty years later published a more comprehensive report covering all the states discussed in the present new report. MRG is grateful to the authors of the 1992 report who generously contributed comments and suggestions during the writing of this entirely new text by Dr Chin Ung Ho of the University of Papua New Guinea, who contributed to MRG's 1997 *World Directory of Minorities* and has considerable first-hand experience of the issues discussed in these pages.

Several key issues emerge for the Chinese of South-East Asia and their host states and societies. The Chinese communities' contribution to the economic development of the region is unquestioned, although the extent to which this has resulted from their exclusion from other walks of life has not been fully acknowledged. Economic prominence represents, moreover, only one aspect of the South-East Asian Chinese experience, because many Chinese remain relatively poor fishers, farmers or small traders.

In Singapore, where they are numerically dominant, the Philippines and Thailand ethnic Chinese have been able to participate in the host society largely on their own terms, infusing it with their cultural contribution, and also free to express a separate identity without fear. But in other South-East Asian countries Chinese have often been unable to maintain their cultural identity as they have wished, or to participate fully in public life. States have denied them citizenship, forced them to assimilate, proscribed their language and religion, and discriminated against them in education and employment, as well as on occasion instigating or tolerating violent atrocities.

This new MRG report shows that the position and prospects of the Chinese of South-East Asia vary from country to country. In Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand they are unlikely to face discrimination or risk in the coming years. However, in Brunei, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam they have a more insecure future and are to different degrees at risk of state-sponsored or officially tolerated discrimination. The outlook may well depend on each country's ability to maintain steady and human-centred – rather than spectacular – economic development, along with steady progress towards a more inclusive and pluralistic form of democracy – democracy in which ethnic difference is respected rather than penalized.

More meaningful political participation by ethnic Chinese will be a key challenge. Relatively active participation in the Philippines and Thailand, and more hopeful current trends in Indonesia, suggest that the future need not be bleak. Yet, while human rights nowadays receive verbal respect in virtually all countries, there is still resistance in the region to devoting resources to the implementation of what continue to be sometimes spoken of as 'Western' and 'alien' ideals contrary to 'Asian values' of group solidarity.

MRG commends the efforts of the many Asian scholars, human rights practitioners and civil society activists who are working to ensure that minority and other human rights are seen as, and become, as integral to democratic life in the East as in the West. To quote the important new Asian Human Rights Charter: 'The plurality of cultural identities in Asia is not contrary to the universality of human rights ... we Asian peoples ... must ... eliminate discriminations based on caste, ethnic origins, occupation, place of origin and others, while enhancing in our respective cultures all values related to mutual tolerance and mutual support. We must stop practices which sacrifice the individual to the collectivity or to the powerful, and thus renew our communal and national solidarity.' [1]

Alan Phillips
Director
November 1999

Introduction

The Nanyang Chinese

More than 1,500 years ago, Chinese merchants began to sail southwards towards South-East Asia in search of trade and wealth. These areas were known as the Nanyang or the South Seas. Almost all those who left China during this period were from southern coastal provinces, principally Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan. The majority were from the Hokkien, Teochiu, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese dialect groups.

Another contact between the Chinese and South-East Asia was through armadas organized by the Chinese emperors. The Chinese claimed South-East Asia as its backyard and many states in the region recognized Chinese dominance, sending tributes to the imperial court in China.

Migration to the Nanyang was not random, but usually occurred through a network based on dialect, kinship (clan), place of origin in China or occupation. Mutual help societies based on the same factors assisted new arrivals to settle, and find employment and credit to start new businesses. The ethnic Chinese thus created a framework within which traditional society could be re-created, maintained and developed and whose individual members could prosper far from home. This phenomenon explains the relative concentration of one or more dialect groups in particular parts of the region today.

Many of these traders hoped to make their fortune before retiring to live in splendour to China. Thus they were referred to as *Hua-qiao* (sojourners) and their contacts with the local inhabitants were limited to trade-related issues. In time, some traders settled permanently, forming relationships with local women and having children. These children were seen as an asset to the business, and some were sent back to China to be educated before working for the family business.

Some rulers in the states of South-East Asia enjoyed excellent relationships with the small Chinese trading communities as the Chinese were willing to pay for protection, or give a percentage of their earnings to the local rulers to further their trade. In Thailand, the royal family even asked the Chinese to manage their trade affairs. The Chinese also opened up new avenues of trade, such as commercial agriculture, and brought new skills. In some regions, the relationship between local rulers and the Chinese became so close that a few Chinese began to acquire political power.

In Vietnam, the situation was different because of its proximity to China. The Chinese ruled Vietnam directly between 111 BCE and 939 CE and during this period two categories of Chinese migrants to the area can be distinguished: first, administrators, farmers and landlords who came to colonize Vietnam, and, second, those seeking refuge from political upheavals in other parts of the Chinese empire. Over time, the distinction between these two groups disappeared.

The coming of the Europeans

The situation remained stable for the Chinese until the coming of the Europeans. The Portuguese arrived first but were soon defeated by the Dutch and the British. The British took Burma (Myanmar), Malaya, Singapore and the north of Borneo Island, while the Dutch took most of Indonesia and south of Borneo Island. The Spanish secured the Philippines while the French were dominant in the Indo-Chinese states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The only state to escape colonialism was Thailand, which remained a buffer state between the English and the French.

At first, the European colonial powers left the Chinese alone. They found the small Chinese trading class useful for their plans to exploit economically the areas under their control. The Chinese served as intermediaries between the local population and the colonizers, using their local knowledge to their advantage. The Europeans were not so interested in small trade, concentrating on large trading houses where profits were greater.

The arrival of the Europeans created new opportunities for the Chinese traders, and the economic opportunities also attracted European traders to the region. They began to see the Chinese as competitors. This led to the introduction of anti-Chinese measures in some countries: confining them to specific neighbourhoods; restricting their movements and the types of occupations they could engage in; stopping the flow of new migrants (especially women) and levying disproportionately high taxes on them. Tension between colonizers and the Chinese sometimes led to riots and massacres. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Spanish attacked and killed many Chinese living in Manila, while the Dutch massacred them in Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) in 1740. These conflicts were primarily caused by trade disputes.

New immigration and opportunity

When the colonizers were firmly in power and had suppressed all political challenges, new Chinese migrants were admitted. The colonizers knew that the Chinese were indispensable to their quest for economic exploitation and expansion. The local people were often deliberately excluded from this for political and security reasons: the Chinese (and Indian migrants in British colonial areas) were easier to control as they were foreigners and could, in theory, be deported at will.

A great many workers were needed for mining and plantation operations and, in the early nineteenth century, the Chinese immigrated in large numbers to the Nanyang. Many of these Chinese already had relatives in South-East Asia and thus were easily absorbed into the communities. Colonial powers like the British organized agents to bring over workers from China (and India). With some exceptions, new Chinese migrants entering Dutch- or French-controlled areas had to pay a substantial entry fee. The island of Singapore played a key role in the movement of people from China into South-East Asia. It was often where new migrants were brought before being shipped off to Malaya, Borneo and the islands of Indonesia, or even as far away as Burma.

These new immigrants had the same hopes as their forebears – to seek their fortunes in the Nanyang before retiring to their village in China – but only a few were able to fulfil this dream. The majority of these migrants did not become wealthy; many were not able to return to their birthplace but died destitute in their new home. Others died of tropical diseases, or from appalling work conditions.

Chinatowns

The influx of Chinese into South-East Asia and Indo-China in the nineteenth century allowed the Chinese community to create their own 'state' within a state. The Chinese immigrants, tried to re-create elements of mainland Chinese society in their new surroundings. The architecture of the houses was based on that of their villages and furnishings were imported from there. Chinese temples were established for traditional faiths such as ancestor worship, Confucianism and the traditional deities of mainland China, together with the all-important Chinese schools. The schools were deemed essential to preserve Chinese culture among the locally born children of the migrants. Many of them used the mainland curriculum and teachers from the mainland. The schools reinforced Chinese identity and fostered separation of the Chinese community from the larger community. In urban areas where there was a sizeable Chinese community, Chinese newpapers were established to carry news about the community and the homeland. The colonial authorities tolerated this, so long as the Chinese did not challenge their political authority and continued to serve their economic purposes.

The degree to which the Chinese population assimilated to the local culture and environment depended on factors such as legal impediments (e.g. restrictions on where the Chinese could live and work); the number of other Chinese living nearby; ease of contacts with the local population; rate of intermarriage or relationships with the local population, especially between Chinese males and local women; and, perhaps most importantly, the receptivity of the locals towards the foreigners.

In some places, such as British Malaya, there was an official 'divide-and-rule' policy. In Dutch-controlled territories and the Spanish-controlled Philippines, the Chinese were required to live in Chinese ghettos. The Dutch discouraged their conversion to Islam, the religion of the majority in the Indonesian archipelago, while the Spanish encouraged conversion to Catholicism, which permitted the Chinese to marry a local person and move out of the ethnic ghetto.

By the early twentieth century, there were two main groups of Chinese in South-East Asia. First were those who had been settled there for a considerable period of time, who spoke the local language, had adopted local dress and food and sometimes married into the local population, and adopted the local religion and customs. The second group consisted of the new migrants who tended to congregate together, trying to maintain Chinese traditions and way of life in the new environment. Many of the newcomers hoped to return to China in their old age.

The China factor

One important factor for the overseas Chinese community was the attitude of the Chinese authorities in the mainland. Up to the early twentieth century the imperial government recognized overseas Chinese as full citizens of China. This meant that they became involved in the internal political conflicts in China. From the 1920s onwards, when China was engulfed in a struggle between the nationalist Guomintang (KMT) under Sun Yat Sen and the Communists under Mao Zedong, politically active overseas Chinese were similarly divided. When Japan invaded China in the 1930s, Chinese communities throughout the Nanyang established funds to raise money for the war effort in China.

When Japan over-ran most of South-East Asia, the local Chinese population bore the brunt of atrocities as the Japanese exacted their revenge for the Nanyang Chinese's support of mainland China. Many Chinese were killed merely on suspicion of being anti-Japanese. The Japanese policy of co-opting the local population into the Japanese administration further alienated the Chinese population from the local people. In some cases, the Japanese deliberately soured the relationship between the local people and the Chinese. The Japanese also planted the seeds of nationalism in many of the countries before they were defeated.

Political loyalties and 'pariah capitalists'

After the Second World War the colonial powers began to withdraw from South-East Asia. The local elite took over and political loyalty to the newly independent states became the crucial issue as nation-building began. The nationalists worried about the Chinese minority; in almost all the countries, the Chinese were dominant in the economy. The local Chinese schools, using the curriculum from either the mainland or Taiwan, were producing students who were more interested in issues relating to China than those of their country of residence or birth, and local Chinese groups and associations were actively either pro-Taiwan or pro-China. This aroused suspicion among the local political elite.

During the Cold War era, China often appeared to be

a dangerous neighbour and Chinese minorities were perceived as a potential 'fifth column'. The support given by Beijing towards communist insurgency movements in Malaysia and Thailand raised further suspicions. Some states responded by making it difficult for Chinese to become citizens (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaya), while others forced them to do so (South Vietnam). In almost all the states, new immigration was halted and the political arena was closed to the Chinese. Other measures taken by the new states included closing down the Chinese schools or bringing them under government control, shutting down Chinese newspapers and discouraging displays of Chinese culture and language. Some countries decided that assimilation was the best policy while others decided that accommodation was better.

With nowhere else to go, the Chinese in the region simply adapted to the new socio-political environment. In Thailand and the Philippines, the official policies were quite successful in integrating the Chinese with the larger society. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, religious and political barriers meant that the Chinese were still viewed with mistrust.

The winding down of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s led to normalization of ties between Beijing and many countries in the region and helped to allay fears about the political loyalties of the Chinese. Promises made by Beijing not to support armed communist or separatist movements in the region helped considerably.

While the Chinese were first brought into the region as labourers, over time they began to work as traders. Since, for the most part, they were denied a place in the political arena, they began to concentrate on and excel in the business arena. In all the countries in the region, the Chinese share of the economy became proportionately greater than their population, creating suspicion, envy and hostility among the local elite over Chinese dominance of their economies. Some countries adopted policies discriminating against the Chinese and favouring the local people. This led to further alienation of the Chinese community from the local population and singled them out for special attention.

Common threads and key differences

In the country studies that follow,[2] common threads can be observed in the experience and current situation of Chinese minorities in many countries of South-East Asia, but there are also key differences. The chief similarity is the strong hold the Chinese minorities have over the economies of most the countries surveyed.

Key differences include the policies pursued by individual governments in the region to deal with the Chinese minorities. The choice has been between assimilation or accommodation/integration, or somewhere in between. Assimilation implies destruction of a minority identity through absorption by the majority, whereas accommodation or integration indicates that both minority and majority adapt to each other, enabling the minority to preserve its identity (to varying degrees). The choices made by the local elite were often dictated by the history of interaction between the Chinese and the local population, barriers to interaction such as religion and customs, the level of intermarriages and the Chinese hold over the economy.

One important similarity in most South-East Asian countries is that governments frequently assert that there is a fundamental cultural difference between the 'individual-centred' West and the 'group-centred' East. Those in power tend not to admit any distinction between minority rights and other human rights, and generally claim that the rights of the majority must prevail over the rights of minorities. Given that, with the exception of Singapore, the Chinese are a minority in all the countries surveyed, this means that issues of minority rights, like broader human rights, are generally regarded by those in power as of low priority.

This view is also driven by political fears – or claims – that any moves to recognize the rights of minorities may endanger the integrity of the state. All the states in the region have sizeable non-Chinese minorities, and the governments claim that these minorities would agitate for more autonomy or even independence if the state were to embrace the concept of minority rights. East Timor is widely held to be an example of the dangers of recognizing such rights by the political elite in the region. This is a misunderstanding however: international standards for minority participation in public life stipulate that enjoyment of such rights must not undermine the sovereignty or integrity of the state.[3] Moreover, the relatively secure position of the Chinese in the Philippines and Thailand demonstrates that good minority–majority relations can and do exist in the region.

The space devoted to each country in the present text is largely based on (a) the level of discrimination faced by the Chinese minority in that particular country, (b) the historical complexities of Chinese migration and interaction with the local population and (c) the degree to which Chinese–majority relations in the country concerned raise important issues of minority rights or provide useful examples of majority–minority peaceful coexistence.

The country studies on Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Burma are relatively long as their Chinese minorities face significant levels of discrimination and are at risk in the coming years. On the other hand, the Philippines entry is short as it is an example of a country where the Chinese minority has successfully integrated itself with the majority and where the majority has broadly accepted the rights of the Chinese to maintain their identity.

There is little discussion of gender differences in the text that follows. Society in the region, including ethnic Chinese communities, is still very much male-dominated, with women widely seen as primary caretakers in the household. The one exception is the industrialized state of Singapore, where women have increasingly entered the workforce and become more economically independent.

China and South-East Asia

Brunei

LAND AREA:	5,765 sq km
POPULATION:	315,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$20,100
UNDP HDI (1999):	25
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	1 January 1984
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Absolute monarchy. Sultan is head of state and government.
ECONOMY:	Main income from natural gas and petroleum.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Malay (official), Chinese, English
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Islam (official), Confucianism, animism, Christianity
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Malays, Chinese (est. 15%), Dusun, Iban, Murut, Kedayan[1]

Negara Brunei Darussalam is a small sultanate located on the northern part of Borneo Island. A former British colony, it became independent only in 1984, after more than a century as a British protectorate. The country is governed by the 1959 Constitution, under which the Sultan is the head of state with full executive authority. The official ideology of the state is *Melayu Islam Beraja* (Malay Islamic Monarchy) (MIB). All political power rests in the hands of the royal family and there is no democracy or any form of political participation. The last election was held in 1962. Shortly after the election, in which the anti-monarchists won, rebels attempted a coup. This was put down with the help of British Gurkha troops. The Constitution was suspended and emergency rule proclaimed.

Brunei today is still officially under emergency rule. The absolute ruler is Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and his family dominates the machinery of government. More than two-thirds of the cabinet posts are held by his siblings and many commentators find it hard to distinguish the Sultan from the state. The oil-fields located off the coast make the tiny sultanate one of the richest countries in the world, with one of the highest standards of living in South-East Asia. The Sultan himself is one of the richest men in the world.

Settlements

The Chinese first came into contact with Brunei in the thirteenth century, most probably through trade. When the Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho visited Brunei in the early fifteenth century, as part of his exploration of South-East Asia, he discovered a significant trading port with resident Chinese traders engaged in profitable trade with the homeland. Soon Brunei became a tributary state of China. Substantial trade with China, in gold and spices, began in the sixteenth century. Brunei's commercial and political power was at its peak in the middle of the seventeenth century. Thereafter the Europeans began to colonize the areas around Brunei. Rebellions also forced the sultanate to give up much of its land, and by the early twentieth century Brunei was reduced to its present size of just 5,765 square kilometres.

The first census showed that there were 736 Chinese in 1911. This number accelerated sharply after oil was discovered in the sultanate in the 1930s. Many migrant Chinese workers began to work for the petroleum and related industries. Most of them were guest workers on one- to three-year contracts. By the mid-1970s the Chinese accounted for about a quarter of Brunei's population. From the early 1980s onwards, the number of new Chinese arrivals in Brunei dropped sharply as the government started an affirmative policy of encouraging local Bruneians to take up employment in both the public and private sectors.

A survey in 1991 revealed that there were about 40,000 Chinese in the sultanate. Approximately half were foreign workers, while 52 per cent were permanent residents. Of these, fewer than half were citizens. The others could not secure Brunei citizenship due to the stringent conditions, amongst others, a minimum of twenty years' residence and fluency in the local Brunei Malay dialect and customs. This left these Chinese stateless and created problems when they wanted to travel. In the early 1990s, several Western countries led by Australia, offered to take a limited number of these stateless Chinese. Those accepted for resettlement tended to be those who were highly educated or who had some financial resources. The number of stateless Chinese left behind is unknown.

Contemporary Brunei

In 1995, the population of Brunei was about 315,000 and the Chinese made up about 45,800 or about 15 per cent of the population. The majority of the Chinese in Brunei are Hokkiens, who mostly live in the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan. The other dialect groups are the Hakkas, Cantonese and Hainanese (found mostly in the Beliat District). Almost all the Chinese live in urban areas.

There are at present eight Chinese schools (five primary and three secondary) in the country. Although run by their individual school boards, they are still under the control of the Ministry of Education and can only teach a syllabus approved by the ministry. Funding for these schools comes mainly from fees and the Chinese community.

The Chinese in Brunei will continue to suffer discrimination as long as the present regime is in place. Under the MIB non-Malays and non-Muslims cannot be accepted as full citizens of the sultanate. The Chinese are denied any place in the civil service and other official institutions, leaving the private sector as the only place they can seek their livelihood. The Chinese dominate most of the small trading operations in the country. The larger trading concerns tend to be owned by members of the royal family, or are sometimes joint ventures between members of the royal family and selected Chinese businessmen, who do all the work while the royal shareholders offer protection and access to state contracts and licences.

One area where the Chinese suffer overt discrimina-

tion is in religion. Brunei is a Islamic state and other religious beliefs are frowned on by the authorities. In 1991, the sale of alcohol was banned and stricter dress codes have been introduced. Pork cannot be sold in public. About 8 per cent of the population are Christians and 14 per cent are Buddhists. By legal definition, a Malay must be a Muslim, hence it is safe to conclude that a sizeable number of ethnic Chinese are Christians while the rest go to temples. A very small number are Muslims, and this is mostly due to marriages to local Muslim women. Under Bruneian (as all Islamic) law, a non-Muslim must convert to Islam upon marriage to a Muslim.

There are several Chinese temples in Brunei, most of them dating from the 1960s. Since independence, the authorities have refused permission for new temples or churches. While Chinese religions and temples are more or less tolerated, Christianity is frowned upon, as it is deemed a threat to Islam. Foreign clerics are denied permission to reside in Brunei and priests have to travel from across the border in Malaysia for Sunday services or to visit parishioners. In February 1998, however, the government allowed the Catholic Church to establish the first apostolic prefecture in the country and to install Monsignor Cornelius Sim, a Bruneian of Chinese origin, as the country's first apostolic prefect.

Proselytizing to Muslims is legally forbidden. No Christian symbols are allowed in public and Christian texts will be confiscated by customs if detected. In September 1998 officials of the Islamic Propagation Centre confiscated gold and other precious Buddhist and Christian icons from a number of goldsmiths in the capital, stating that the open display of these items 'offended local sensitivities'. The goldsmiths were later informed that they could recover their property from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The official policy of the sultanate on minorities is assimilation. This requires the Chinese to convert to Islam, adopt a Malay name and give up their Chinese culture and background.

At present, the role of the Chinese in the economy is tolerated because of the extensive wealth generated by the oil fields. Brunei's revenues almost entirely come from royalties on oil and gas. Aware that these are finite resources, the Brunei government in recent years tried to develop light manufacturing, but this policy has been unsuccessful.

The future for the Chinese and other minorities looks bleak when the oil eventually runs out. The royal family will no longer be able to buy the support of the people and will have to give up their stranglehold on politics and life in the country. The growth of an educated Bruneian middle class in the coming years will mean a greater demand for political involvement and representation. The situation of stateless Chinese remains unchanged and, without citizenship papers, they are easily exploited. Even those Chinese with Brunei citizenship will be targeted if there is any social disorder, as they are the most visible minority in the country. Their strong presence in the private sector also makes them easy targets for any Bruneian nationalists. The Chinese are also becoming a smaller percentage of the total population, making their position more vulnerable.

Burma (Myanmar)

LAND AREA:	676,578 sq km
POPULATION:	44,497,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999)	US$1,200
UNDP HDI (1999)	128
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	4 January 1948
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Military dictatorship. President, head of state and of government since April 1992. Constitution and legislature suspended since 1988.
ECONOMY:	Mainly based on agriculture and timber, some industry and services.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Burmese (official), ethnic languages
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism, Christianity, Islam
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Burmese, Karens, Kayan, Shan, Kashin, Nagas, Indians, Chinese (est. less than 2%)

Burma, known officially as Myanmar,[5] is unique in South-East Asia.[6] Since independence in 1948, it has isolated itself, only recently opening up to the world. Since 1962, it has been ruled by a military regime. The majority Burmans[7] comprise around two-thirds of the population, but Burma is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Asia and there are a dozen other ethnic groups and over 100 languages or dialects. The Burmans dominate the alluvial plains and the major towns and cities in the centre of the country. The hills and mountains bordering the neighbouring countries of India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand are populated by ethnic minorities. These peoples have long resisted Burman domination. There are no precise figures for the Chinese population but most experts agree that it is less than 2 per cent of a population of nearly 50 million.

The Chinese connection goes back centuries as the northern part of Burma borders on the Chinese province of Yunnan. The border is relatively open and there is a long history of Yunnanese trade and settlement in the northeast. When the British took over the country between 1824 and 1886, to the resentment of the majority Burman population, they brought in new Chinese immigrants from British Malaya and Singapore, and some from China. Like the Indian immigrants encouraged by the British they worked in many occupations. They worked in the mines in the Shan states, provided much of the urban labour force, operated small businesses and built rice mills in central Burma. This pattern has remained to this day: the Yunnanese Chinese predomi-

nate among the Chinese population in the border areas (the sub-state of Choking is almost entirely Chinese), while the recently arrived Cantonese and Hokkien communities are more numerous in the urban areas in the centre and south of the country.

When the communists defeated the nationalist Guomintang (KMT) in mainland China in 1949, part of the retreating KMT forces moved south, across the border and settled down there. They established contact with Taiwan and were given considerable financial and military support. Until the early 1980s, Chinese who had settled in the Thai border area remained active in the thriving black market trade, paying scant regard to the regime in Rangoon. Some became involved in the drug trade, working with Shan and other ethnic insurgent forces to control parts of the area known as the 'golden triangle'.

In response to anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon in 1967, the Beijing government stepped up supplies and training for the insurgent Communist Party of Burma (CPB) which was fighting the Burmese government. During a decade of full military support, the CPB, boosted by a number of Chinese advisers and Red Guard volunteers, successfully took over a large portion of the rugged borderlands adjoining Yunnan, forcing out any remaining pockets of KMT resistance. Thus, in the complex world of insurgent politics in northeast Burma, during the four decades following independence, Chinese influence and arms were a constant feature of life.

In 1989, war weariness and internal divisions led to the CPB breaking up into four factions along ethnic lines. Subsequently, the CPB mutineers were the first of a number of ethnic insurgent groups to sign peace deals with the new military junta in Rangoon, which gave them local autonomy and the right to carry arms until a new Constitution is introduced. Several groups, however, continue to finance their movements through the illicit narcotics trade, increasing international concerns about this sensitive border region.

Military regime

When the military, headed by General Ne Win, took power in 1962, they adopted a nationalist programme known as the 'Burmese way to socialism', which was based on an idiosyncratic blend of Buddhist, nationalist and isolationist principles. All Chinese schools and newspapers were banned. More than 100,000 ethnic Chinese left the country within the first five years of military rule as the junta moved to nationalize the economy. In June 1967, there were anti-Chinese riots in the capital's Chinatown in which a number of Chinese and Sino-Burmese were killed.

Ironically, the nationalization of the economy and the autarkic policies benefited the small number of Chinese remaining as they began to dominate a flourishing black market trade which the regime had little choice but to tolerate. The military junta left them alone as long as they did not express their Chinese culture openly.

By the early 1980s, the political climate in both Beijing and Rangoon had changed. Reformers took power in China and were keen to improve relations, especially economic relations, with their troubled neighbour. In mid-1988, as the Burmese economy teetered on the brink of collapse, millions of demonstrators took to the streets across the country, calling for democratic change. In September that year, military hardliners cracked down, killing hundreds of protestors in the streets, but the new military junta, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, felt compelled to institute change. Democratic reforms were promised, and a new 'open-door' and 'market-oriented' economic policy was announced.

An election was held in 1990, but the result was not what the military junta had expected. The National League for Democracy (NLD), headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest, won by a landslide. The military refused to recognize the results and hand over power. Suu Kyi remained under house arrest until 1995 and the arrest and harassment of pro-democracy activists continued. Such extensive suppression caused the West to scale down diplomatic contacts with the regime, while a trade boycott advocated by exiled campaign groups met with success among many companies and Western governments.

China stepped into this vacuum, becoming Burma's main trading partner and main source of arms and military hardware. In the 1990s it was estimated that Beijing accounted for about half of Burma's external trade.

The opening up of the economy attracted considerable interest from Chinese businessmen around the region, especially Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. Some of these Chinese had ties to Burma as they were part of the exodus of the 1960s. Chinese capital from Singapore became the largest source of foreign investment in reconstructing the economy. Together with local Chinese enterprises, the Chinese are estimated to control as much as 70 per cent of the economy. Huge political and economic problems remain, but the pace of investment has increased since Burma joined ASEAN in 1998, despite the regional economic downturn and crisis.

The ties with China and the influx of Chinese businessmen appear to have had only a limited impact on the regime's formal policy towards the Chinese population in Burma. In a policy directed against ethnic Chinese and Indians in particular, laws enacted after independence in 1948 (and subsequently further toughened) limited granting of citizenship to indigenous peoples (such as the Burmans or Shin) and those who can prove they had ancestors living in the country before the first British annexation in 1824. Thus many Chinese can only get citizenship by buying papers, a common occurrence due to the corrupt bureaucracy. Those who are unable to buy citizenship papers, including those born and raised in the country, are registered as resident foreigners, and face restrictions on domestic travel as well as being barred from some university programmes in medicine and technological fields.

In recent years, a large number of Yunnanese have crossed into northern Burma to seek new economic opportunities. Many of them bought citizenship papers and settled down permanently. This has caused uneasiness in the local population and has re-ignited anti-foreigner/Chinese feeling and rhetoric which, on occasion, has been allowed expression in the newspapers by the censors. The military junta has so far neither encouraged nor

discouraged this, but it could become a volatile issue, with many in the military government also wary of becoming too susceptible to Chinese influence, from both inside and outside the country.

The Chinese in the south of the country are generally more integrated into the population. Over the years, many have married local women and are largely indistinguishable from the indigenous population. This is especially true of the Chinese in lower Burma, where there is a high rate of intermarriage. Although Chinese schools are mostly banned in government-controlled areas (there are a few exceptions in border areas), some Chinese families send their children for private tuition or to Thailand and Singapore to get a Chinese education. However, many Chinese cannot afford this so many the younger Chinese do not speak Chinese. More than half the Chinese from lower Burma are Hokkiens, with the Cantonese being the only other significant dialect group.

Prospects

As for the peoples of Burma in general, the prospects for the Chinese community rest with a political solution to the impasse between the junta, Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD and the country's diverse ethnic minority movements. Through the 1990 election victory, her party has popular support and legitimacy while the ethnic opposition groups, many of which won seats in the 1990 election or have agreed ceasefires with the junta, are also anxious to be part of the peaceful political solution Burma desperately needs. The military junta, renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997, have tried to force her to leave the country several times, but she has refused, believing that the junta will not allow her to return.

As long as the military remains in charge, the country will be ostracized by most of the Western community and denied investment and aid. This leaves many economic opportunities open to the Chinese from the mainland and those in the region, and their hold on the economy is likely to be strengthened. This could lead to anti-Chinese resentment among the local people in the long run.

Given the state of the economy, its ASEAN membership and its close ties with Beijing, however, the military junta is likely to protect Chinese commercial interests, and certain cultural rights of the community. It has little alternative. The junta is hoping that economic growth through reforms will ultimately lead to improved living standards, political legitimacy and the long-term erosion of support for the NLD.

If the military junta does fall or give way to a civilian leadership, it is likely that the same pragmatic and business interests will force the new leaders to protect the commercial interests of the Chinese community. However, there may be some selective prosecution of Chinese businesses and individuals who invested in the country during the rule of the military junta. The NLD has asked all foreign investors to refrain from investing in Burma to increase pressure on the regime. Most Chinese businessmen in the region have not heeded this request.

Culturally, as long as the Chinese population do not exhibit their Chinese-ness too strongly, there should be no open display of anti-Chinese sentiments. In spite of this, many Chinese do not see a stable or long-term future for themselves given past precedents for anti-Chinese violence at times of political and economic tension. Those who can afford it may set up a safe home overseas; others will stay as they have no other options.

Cambodia

LAND AREA:	181,035 sq km
POPULATION:	10,716,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$1,350
UNDP HDI (1999):	137
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	9 November 1953
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Parliamentary monarchy; king, first and second prime minister with a 120-member National Assembly.
ECONOMY:	Mainly agriculture, small industrial and services sectors.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Khmer (official), Chinese, Vietnamese
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism (official), Islam, Christianity
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Khmer, Cham and indigenous hill peoples, Chinese (est. 2.5%), Vietnamese

Links between the Kingdom of Cambodia and China go back to at least the third century AD when there was official contact between the two countries. By the 1400s, a significant Chinese minority had settled in the capital Phnom Penh, a major trading port, and further waves of Chinese came to trade and settle. When the French took over in 1864 the Chinese were already dominant in the economy. The French left the Chinese alone, using a system of indirect rule. Each dialect group was defined as a *congrégation*, with their leader dealing directly with the French authorities. Up to 1920, almost all the Chinese migrants were men, leading to high intermarriage rates with Khmer women. After 1923, Chinese women arrived in large numbers, leading to the formation of Chinese families. Chinese schools and associations expanded as a result of this.

The independence period

At independence in 1953, the Chinese population was estimated at about 425,000, or 10 per cent of the population. For two decades Cambodia was ruled by Prince Sihanouk who established ties with Beijing in 1956, ensuring that most of the Chinese associations in the country became pro-Beijing as well. Chinese schools and newspapers flourished during this period. In 1954 and 1956, laws promulgated on nationality and immigration allowed the majority of Chinese to take out full Cambodian citizenship which many did. This also allowed the Chinese to circumvent laws passed in 1956 that restricted some occupations to citizens. It was estimated that 95 per cent of the commercial class were Chinese then but this did not create any problem with the indigenous Khmer. There was no Khmer business class to speak off and many Khmers relied on the Chinese commerce and services.

The relatively privileged position of the Chinese ended abruptly when General Lon Nol staged a coup in 1970. He sided with the Americans in the escalating Vietnam War, and closed down all Chinese schools and newspapers, accusing them of spreading communist propaganda. He also launched an anti-Chinese campaign which culminated in anti-Chinese riots in urban areas where some Chinese traders were killed. This frightened the Chinese and many simply avoided open display of their Chinese background. The Lon Nol regime also issued special Chinese identity cards and levied special taxes on them.

By now the Indo-Chinese war was at its height and rural Cambodia was the target of secret American bombings. Chinese living in the countryside moved to the urban areas. At this critical period, with the country in a state of war, the Khmer Rouge, a China-backed guerrilla group now in alliance with Prince Sihanouk, grew in strength and, in 1975, the corrupt Lon Nol regime fell.

Together with the rest of the population, the Chinese suffered mass murder on an unprecedented scale at the hands of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1978. About half of Cambodia's Chinese population perished under rule of Pol Pot, who attempted to wipe out all vestiges of capitalism by moving the entire population into the countryside. Since the Chinese formed the bulk of the business class, they suffered disproportionately. The Khmer Rouge nationalistic policy, principally aimed at the Vietnamese, also affected the Chinese. Thousands of non-Khmer were summarily executed, and there is no doubt that some of them were ethnic Chinese.

In 1979, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and installed a puppet regime, the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The new regime did not bring any relief to the Chinese community. Instead, the Chinese were targeted when China decided to back an anti-PRK guerrilla coalition operating from the Thai–Cambodian border. The PRK regime forced many of the remaining Chinese to leave the country, especially after the Chinese mini-invasion of North Vietnam in 1979. The Chinese who stayed kept a low profile. The war in Cambodia lasted another decade, until the UN brokered a peace in 1991.

Contemporary Cambodia

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the main backer of the Vietnamese, had a big impact on Cambodia. With Soviet aid drying up and economic reforms starting, the Vietnamese withdrew their military in 1989. Things began to look more positive for the Chinese. The 1991 Paris Peace Accords set the stage for a UN-supervised election in 1993 which led to the formation of a civilian government. Earlier, in 1990, the government passed a bill giving the Chinese full rights as citizens and the right to form their own associations and schools, and to celebrate Chinese festivals publicly. The Association of Chinese Nationals in Cambodia was established followed by the reopening of a Chinese school. In 1991, Chinese (Lunar) New Year was celebrated openly in the streets of Phnom Penh after a gap of more than 20 years.

The increasing official tolerance towards the Chinese community can be explained largely by two factors. Cambodia's King Sihanouk had long-term ties with Beijing (he was offered sanctuary by the Chinese government for most of the Khmer Rouge and the PRK periods) and had always enjoyed good relations with the Cambodian Chinese community. Second, the reconstruction of Cambodia has relied extensively on ethnic Chinese capital from the region, especially Malaysia and Singapore. The local Chinese have also reasserted their dominance in the economy and most of Cambodia's political parties rely on financial support from these Chinese businesses. The richest man in Cambodia today is a Chinese businessman while some leading politicians are part-Chinese.

The Chinese in Cambodia today do not face any real discrimination. Khmer animosity is directed towards their traditional enemy, the Vietnamese. Intermarriage with the Khmer is common and the Chinese are generally well assimilated in Cambodian society.

More than 70 per cent of the Chinese in the country are Teochius, about 10 per cent are Cantonese, with the Hainanese, Hakka and Hokkien making up the rest. It is estimated that there are about 300,000 ethnic Chinese, or about 2.5 per cent of the 11.3 million population.

Indonesia

LAND AREA:	1,904,569 sq km
POPULATION:	212,338,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$2,940
UNDP HDI (1999):	105
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	17 Aug. 1945
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Mixed parliamentary and presidential democracy. Prior to 1998, an authoritarian presidential system backed up by powerful military.
ECONOMY:	Traditionally agriculturally based, income from oil, gas and minerals, and large industrialized and services sectors.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Bahasa Indonesia (official), Javanese, English, local dialects
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Javanese (half the population), Malays, numerous regional groups, Indians, Chinese (est. 2.9%), indigenous groups

Numerically the Republic of Indonesia has the largest number of ethnic Chinese in the region. There are about 6 million Chinese, less than 3.5 per cent of the population of approximately 212 million. Despite this, they own about 80 per cent of the private sector economy, causing widespread resentment from *pribumi* (local Indonesian) groupings and active discrimination by the government. This has led to periodic physical attacks on them, most appallingly in the 1960s and most recently in May 1998, when organized mobs targeted the community while the authorities stood by. Mass rape of Chinese women took place and thousands of Chinese were forced to flee Indonesia. The Chinese in Indonesia stand out in the region as the community that has experienced most physical attacks from local people, and who remain most at risk from attack and overt discrimination.

Settlements

The Chinese first came to Indonesia in the late thirteenth century,[8] but larger-scale immigration took place under Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch divide-and-rule policy encouraged the Chinese to maintain their own identity, and this kept up the barriers between the Chinese and *pribumis*. The Dutch also used the Chinese as intermediaries in dealing with the *pribumis*. Thus the Chinese came to dominate the distributive trade, and became obvious targets for economic nationalists after the Dutch left.

In the eighteenth century, Chinese were encouraged to immigrate to work the tin mines of Bangka and the gold mines of western Borneo (now Kalimantan Borneo), and to continue to settle in cities and towns forming a broad arc around Singapore. Since this Chinese immigration was almost entirely male, considerable intermarriage occurred, giving rise to Sino-Indonesian *peranakan* communities, particularly in Java and parts of Sumatra and Sulawesi, that adopted local customs and language, ceremonies, manners and beliefs.

With the development of large-scale export agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries large-scale Chinese immigration began. Nearly all Chinese in Indonesia came from either Fujian or Guangdong provinces in southern China. The dominant languages among these immigrants were Hokkien, Hakka and Cantonese. Most were engaged in petty trading, mining, or were skilled artisans. Their large numbers gave rise to the development of Chinese families and communities in Java, but particularly in the outer islands, which retained Chinese language, religion and customs. The Dutch policy of segregating the Chinese into neighbourhoods further limited contact with the local population. Prior to 1919, as a general rule Chinese had to live in separate urban neighbourhoods and could travel only with government permits.

Broadly speaking then, there are two types of Chinese Indonesians: *totok* and *peranakan*. *Totoks* are recent Chinese arrivals, primarily Buddhist or Christian, who speak Chinese and follow Chinese customs. They dominate business in Indonesia and cooperate closely with each other. *Peranakan* refers to those who have lived in Indonesia for several generations and have adopted many of the local customs, languages and lifestyles. *Peranakan* usually have some Indonesian ancestry, through intermarriage with the local population. Most of this group cannot speak Chinese and feel more at ease with the local people than with the *totoks*. They are mostly Christians and Buddhists. Although some are involved in business, they are not as prominent as the *totoks* and do not normally cooperate with them in business.

Independence

Open hostility towards the Chinese and discrimination against them by the state began with de facto independence in 1950.[9] More than 50 per cent of the Chinese in the country could not secure citizenship because of their perceived collaboration with the former Dutch regime in exploiting the indigenous peoples, and their perceived loyalty to China or Taiwan. In 1959, a presidential decree was issued banning 'aliens', i.e. the Chinese, from running businesses in the rural areas. An estimated 90,000–120,000 Chinese left Indonesia during this period.

Large-scale massacres of the Chinese took place a few years later when Suharto seized power from Sukarno. Suharto accused the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) of attempting a coup and launched an anti-communist campaign lasting from 1965 to1966. The Chinese were labelled as supporters of the PKI and thousands were massacred. Although the Chinese community probably supported the PKI, there were no Chinese in the PKI leadership and many more *pribumi* Indonesians supported the PKI than Chinese. The rise of the communists in China and traditional resentments made the Chinese in Indonesia convenient scapegoats. Suharto's campaign was part of his strategy for seizing power. There are still no precise figures on the number of Chinese killed, but the figure is likely to be in the hundreds of thousands.[10]

Suharto's authoritarian regime became known as the 'New Order'. Its aim was to assimilate the Chinese population. New regulations prohibited Chinese schools, Chinese cultural groups or trade associations, and public display of Chinese characters. The government permitted the publication of a government-owned, Chinese-language daily newspaper, but banned the import of Chinese-language material. All ethnic Chinese were forced to take Indonesian-sounding names.

Although the official policy was assimilation, this did not mean that the Chinese were accepted by the state as full citizens. Identity cards, compulsory for all Indonesians, used to have a special code for identifying ethnic Chinese, thus subjecting them to abuse or exploitation by any official. Whenever an ethnic Chinese applies for company licences, passport, legal papers or other documents, officials often ask for 'special charges'. The special code automatically excludes the Chinese from the civil service and military, and an informal quota (10 per cent) operates in state-funded universities. No Chinese were allowed to take part in the political process and, during Suharto's 32 years in power, there was not a single cabinet minister of Chinese descent.

The fact that the majority of Chinese in Indonesia were non-Muslims in the world's largest Muslim country created an additional barrier between the Chinese and the *pribumi*. The *pribumi* were especially hostile towards the Christian Chinese, who were perceived as a threat to their religion. The fact that some of the top Chinese businessmen were Christians who had funded and built new churches meant that churches came to symbolize areas that were populated by 'rich' Chinese.

Another problem was the issue of stateless Chinese. When Suharto assumed power in 1965, he broke off diplomatic relations with China, instantly causing about 300,000 Chinese resident in Indonesia to become stateless. These Chinese suffered significant discrimination (e.g. they cannot travel freely because they cannot get an Indonesian passport). In 1990, Indonesia restored diplomatic relations with China and, in 1993, Suharto announced that those who reject Chinese (People's Republic of China) citizenship would be eligible for Indonesian citizenship.

Crony capitalism

To consolidate his personal power and wealth, Suharto handpicked a select group of Chinese businessmen as his business cronies. These businessmen, known as *cukongs*, were given monopolies in essential items such as flour, and preferential treatment in state tender processes and licence applications. Suharto chose the Chinese to act for him because they had a reputation for being entrepre-

neurial and, more importantly, they could not challenge him politically no matter how wealthy they became.

The lasting legacy of this policy was twofold. First, it helped the Chinese (the selected few *cukongs*) to dominate the Indonesian economy almost totally. Of the top ten Indonesian business conglomerates in the 1990s, nine were owned by *cukong* ethnic Chinese. The only *pribumi* conglomerate in the top ten belonged to Suharto's siblings. The second effect of Suharto's policy was to exacerbate the resentment of the *pribumi* against the Chinese. Many *pribumi* businessmen felt that they were being actively discriminated against and Suharto's opponents began to point to the Chinese as reason the *pribumi* did not own a significant share of their own economy.

The resentment led to outbursts and riots against Chinese business. Recent ones include the 1994 Medan riots by factory workers, protesting against the owners who were all Chinese. There have also been anti-Chinese demonstrations and riots in Semarang, Yogyakarta and Ujungpandang in which several hundred ethnic Chinese have died. In 1974 anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese riots erupted on the occasion of the visit to Jakarta of the Japanese Prime Minister.

In the first two decades of his rule, Suharto was able to contain criticism of his policies towards the Chinese through the security apparatus directed by the military, ABRI.[11] Critics of Suharto were routinely banished to remote islands or jailed – criticizing the president was a criminal offence in Indonesia. Moreover, although the *pribumi* businessmen disliked Suharto's economic policies, he had a degree of political legitimacy among the poor because of the pace of development and the massive drop in poverty rates during his decades in power. Although the economic growth of Indonesia in the 1980s and early 1990s enriched only a few, the economic pie was large enough to silence some of his *pribumi* critics. Suharto did try to promote a few *pribumi* businesses but these were mostly owned by members of his family and senior ABRI figures, as a reward for their loyal support. Often lucrative contracts for major infrastructure projects such as highways, ports, television stations and airports were awarded to joint-venture companies owned by the *cukongs* and his sons and daughters.

The rapid growth of the economy allowed Suharto to relax some of his anti-Chinese policies in the early 1990s. Chinese-language materials begun to appear in neighbourhoods in urban centres with large Chinese populations such as Jakarta and Medan. The government has allowed Chinese-language instruction for employees in the tourism industry since 1994 and the University of Indonesia, the nation's most prestigious tertiary institution, has begun offering Chinese language courses openly. Local regulations forbid the celebration of the Chinese New Year in temples or public places, but enforcement is limited.

The fall of Suharto

When the Asian financial crisis hit Indonesia in 1997, the *rupiah* went into free fall, and the Indonesian economy collapsed. Indonesia was vulnerable to currency attacks partly because of the inherent weakness of the economy caused by the corruption and nepotism led by Suharto himself. He looked for excuses and the Chinese were the natural scapegoat, as they always have been. The *pribumi* saw the ethnic Chinese as the main beneficiaries of the old corrupt system. They felt that the *cukong* system benefited the establishment and the politically connected Chinese at their expense. Indeed, the *cukongs* are often cited as evidence of Chinese control over the Indonesian economy and thus a threat to *pribumi* economic nationalism. As the political pressures mounted, students began to hold demonstrations on the streets with the support of the *pribumi* middle class. The Chinese were accused of hoarding and manipulating prices.

Soon, mobs began to target Chinese businesses. Shopping centres owned by ethnic Chinese were looted and burned throughout the archipelago. Many churches were burnt as they were associated with 'rich' Chinese Christians. There were physical attacks on Chinese on the streets. Reports that the Chinese had transferred about US$15–20 billion out of Indonesia, deepening the collapse of the economy, further fuelled the anti-Chinese mood. About 70,000 Chinese left the country, mostly for Singapore, Malaysia and Australia. This was possible only for the elite. The overwhelming majority of Chinese in Indonesia had no choice but to stay. In early 1998 reports began to circulate that organized mobs in major urban centres were targeting Chinese women for sexual humiliation and in order to spread fear in the community.

On 21 May 1999, after ABRI withdrew its support, Suharto stepped down and was replaced by his handpicked successor, Bacharuddin J. Habibie, who was vice-president. International and domestic pressures forced Habibie to establish a fact-finding team made up of representatives of ABRI, the National Human Rights Commission, other government agencies and NGOs. The report, released in November 1998, concluded that the riots were organized as part of an 'elite political struggle' and that there had been 52 rapes, 14 rapes accompanied by other violence, 10 instances of sexual attacks and 4 instances of sexual harassment in Jakarta, Medan and Surabaya in connection with the May riots. The majority of the victims were Chinese women.

Many NGOs and human rights activists rejected the report, claiming that the figures were grossly understated. ABRI had even denied that there were widespread rapes. The NGOs pointed out that many of the rape and sexual abuse victims did not file reports as they had received death threats and anonymous letters warning them against doing so. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reported that terror among the victims was still great one year after the event.

Earlier, in July 1998, the National Human Rights Commission found that 'widespread and repeated rape of a particularly inhumane nature occurred'; in particular, some rapes occurred in front of the families of victims. This was carried out in a 'systematic manner' and focused on ethnic Chinese women and girls. The Commission found that there was a uniform *modus operandi* in the way that the rapes were carried out. It stated that the security vacuum during the initial days of the unrest indicated a neglect of state responsibility, which could have permitted the sexual violence to occur.

There was widespread suspicion that the Indonesian Special Forces, KOSTRAD, led by Suharto's son-in-law, Lt General Prabowo, were involved in the attacks and rapes, with the aim of destabilizing the nation. The theory was that this would lead to direct military rule to preserve the existing political order. The Habibie regime has been reluctant to investigate these claims, and has instead sacked Prabowo from the military.

In September 1998, Habibie issued a presidential decree establishing a Law Reform Team to revise all state policies and laws to abolish discrimination against the Chinese. The decree also banned the use of the terms '*pribumi*' and 'non-*pribumi*'. The Home Ministry has said it will not stop using special codes for Chinese on identity cards, however, and legislative reform has yet to be initiated. Thus far, the Law Reform Team has not reported and there are no indications that it has actually start working.

The 1999 elections

The fall of Suharto led to Indonesia's first free elections in 1999. For the first time in more than three decades, Indonesian Chinese took an active part in the elections. New parties that openly promoted Chinese participation in the political process, such as the Chinese-Indonesian Reform Party and Unity in Diversity Party, were established. Other political parties also fielded ethnic Chinese as candidates in the elections.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of President Sukarno, emerged as the winner with about one-third of the vote. Her main economic adviser was Mr Kwik Kian Gie, a prominent Chinese economist, and many of the successful candidates from her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (PDI-P), were Chinese and Christians.

Although Megawati won the largest number of votes, she was unable to gain the support of the People's Assembly and a coalition of Islamic parties and Golkar (the former ruling party) voted in Abdulraham Wahid as the president on 20 October 1999. Wahid, better known as Gus Dur, heads the Nahdatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, with an estimated membership of 40 million. He is respected as a democrat with a non-exclusive vision of Islam and the state. It is too early to tell what Mr Wahid's policies will be towards the Chinese and other minorities, but first signs are encouraging. He has appointed Kwik Kian Gie to the economics portfolio, the first ethnic Chinese member of the cabinet in more than three decades. He has also assured all minorities, especially the Chinese and Christians, of protection and equal treatment. The respected chair of the Human Rights Commission, Marzuki Darusman, has been appointed to the key post of attorney general.

There is a growing realization among the political elite that if Indonesia is to recover economically, the capital and entrepreneurial skills of the Chinese are crucial. Those who were happy with the exodus on the grounds that it would create opportunities for the *pribumi* population have been disappointed. The skills, networking, experience and trust that have been handed down from generation to generation of the Chinese simply could not be replaced overnight.

Prospects

Whoever is in power in Indonesia will have to deal with the issue of the Chinese minority. They are not the source of Indonesia's problems, but it is convenient for disaffected people to blame them. The overwhelming number of Indonesian Chinese are ordinary people. They do not speak Chinese and they have no wish to leave Indonesia. Unless the institutions of the state stop singling out the Chinese, and unless the anti-Chinese political culture changes, the Chinese in Indonesia remain at risk.

Laos

LAND AREA:	236,800 sq km
POPULATION:	5,163,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$1,325
UNDP HDI (1999):	140
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	19 July 1949
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	President, head of state, with a prime minister and one-party system.
ECONOMY:	Agriculture, mainly subsistence, plus small industrial and service sectors.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Lao (official), Mon-Kher
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, animism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Lao Loum, Lao Theung, Lao Soung, incl. Hmong ('Meo') and Yao (Mien), Vietnamese, Chinese (est. 2%)

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a landlocked country bordered by China, Vietnam, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand and Cambodia and, because of its strategic location, has nearly always been dominated by one or other of its neighbours.

For centuries, Laos was a tributary state of China, but few Chinese came to trade or live in the country due to its remoteness from the main trading routes. Relatively large-scale Chinese immigration only occurred during the French occupation (1893 on) and in the immediate post-independence years.

The French brought in Chinese to expand the economy and staff the administration. Incentives such as tax concessions and land were given to migrants who were willing to go into commercial agriculture and small trade. Still, many Chinese were reluctant to come to Laos due to its mountainous terrain and limited trade opportunities, prefering Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia. When independence came in 1954, there were only 30,000 Chinese out of Laos's 2 million population.

Independence brought a larger number of Chinese into the country. This was primarily due to external factors. The Vietnam conflict had started and the Americans, fearful of communism spreading, decided to shore up the non-communist Indo-Chinese economy by pouring in millions in aid money. Many Thai Chinese moved in to take up the economic opportunities and, by the early 1970s, the number of Chinese had swelled to about 45,000–50,000, or about 2 per cent of the population. They dominated all facets of commercial life.

The fall of South Vietnam in 1975 led directly to an armed uprising by the pro-Vietnamese Pathet Lao movement. They seized power and set up a communist state. Between 1975 and 1982, close to 10 per cent of the population left the country, including almost all the Chinese who had come there after independence. Chinese schools were closed, and most Chinese businesses. Those who stayed kept a low profile. With such a small community left, it was easy for the Chinese who stayed to integrate into Laotian society.

In the 1990s, it was estimated that the Chinese numbered no more than 6,000, less than 1 per cent of the 5.2 million population, around 70 per cent of whom were from the Teochiu dialect group. Almost all the Chinese live in the capital, Vientiane, or in the second largest city, Savannakhet. Many second- and third-generation Chinese married local Laotian women, adopted Laotian names and are thus indistinguishable from the local people.

In 1986, the Pathet Lao followed their Vietnamese backers in announcing that the country would pursue market reforms of the economy. Some of the Chinese who stayed began to reopen their small trading stores, while others started new business ventures. They have slowly begun to reassert their predominance in the economy, especially in the retail sector, restaurants and hotels.

The government's policy of opening the country has attracted some foreign investors, including some of the Chinese who left in 1975. However, given the relatively small size of the population and the country, economic opportunities on a scale attractive to foreign investors are severely limited.

In the 1990s, the Chinese community in Laos does not face significant levels of discrimination, and many members of the political elite are themselves part-Chinese.

Malaysia

LAND AREA:	329,758 sq km
POPULATION:	21,410,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$7,370
UNDP HDI (1999):	56
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	31 August 1957
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Federal parliamentary semi-democracy with strong authoritarian central government. Head of state is a constitutional monarch, elected every five years from among nine regents (sultans). Head of government is prime minister. Central bicameral parliament, with a constitution and legislative assembly for every state.
ECONOMY:	Agriculture and resource-based with large industrial and service sectors.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Bahasa Melayu (official), English, Chinese dialects, Tamil, Hindi, many regional languages
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Islam (official), Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Sikhism, animism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Malay, Chinese (est. 27%), Indians, Kadazan-Dusun, Muruts, Bidayuh, Iban and others

The federation of Malaysia was created in 1963, comprising peninsular Malaya, Singapore, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak. Sabah and Sarawak are located on Borneo Island. In 1965, Singapore was ejected from the federation after its leader, Lee Kuan Yew, challenged the notion of Malay political supremacy.

Malaysia is where, proportionately, the ethnic Chinese constitute the largest minority group in the whole of South-East Asia. Ethnic Chinese constitute about 27 per cent of Malaysia's 20 million population. The ethnic Malays and other *bumiputera* make up about 59 per cent, Indians 8 per cent and others 6 per cent. The demography of Sabah and Sarawak are significantly different from the peninsula. In the peninsula, the main local ethnic group is the Malays while in Sabah it is the Kadazan-Dusun, and in Sarawak it is the Iban Dayak.

Settlements

A small number of Chinese traders probably first settled in Malaya during the fifteenth century. Large-scale Chinese immigration, however, only occurred during the British colonial administration in the nineteenth century. The majority of the new settlers were Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, Teochiu and Hainanese. The British policy of 'divide and rule' meant that the community had little contact with the local Malay population. The Chinese formed their own associations and built their own schools, temples and even townships. More than 50 per cent of Chinese lived in urban areas, a pattern that persists today. In the 1950s, large numbers of Chinese were resettled by the British into camps (called 'new villages') throughout the northern part of the peninsula when an armed insurrection was launched by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The MCP was led mostly by pro-Beijing Chinese. The insurrection was put down by the British after more than a decade of fighting but it left an impression among the Malay community that some Chinese were loyal to communist China, creating a further barrier between the Malay and Chinese. The signing of a peace agreement between the MCP and the Malaysian government in 1989 and economic reforms in China in the past decade have erased this perception.

The Chinese in Sabah and Sarawak have distinct histories. The Chinese in Sarawak first arrived in large numbers in mid-eighteenth century from what is now West Kalimantan, Indonesia. These were mainly Hakka gold miners who settled in the gold-rich areas of Bau. There was no new migration until the early twentieth century, when large-scale migration began directly from China. This was organized by the Brooke family, the rulers of Sarawak, for the purpose of economic expansion. The first large group from China was made up mostly of Fuzhou Methodists led by a missionary. Agents were later appointed in Singapore to recruit labourers directly from southern China and Hong Kong. The biggest dialect group in Sarawak today is the Fuzhous followed closely by the Hakkas and Hokkiens. The Chinese make up about 29 per cent of Sarawak's 2.1 million population.

Sabah was ceded to a private company, the British North Borneo Company, in 1881. To develop the state, the company engaged agents in China to recruit labourers. The first arrivals were mostly Hakka Christians led by a missionary from Hong Kong. The Hakkas were followed by Cantonese and Hokkiens. At present, the largest dialect grouping in Sabah is still the Hakkas, followed by the Cantonese and Hokkiens. The Sabah Chinese account for only 12 per cent of Sabah's 1.8m population today.

Political framework

The most important political distinction in Malaysia is the *bumiputera*/non-*bumiputera* dichotomy. '*Bumiputera*' (literally 'son of the soil') is a legal term meaning that the state recognizes the indigenous status of the citizen. 'Non-*bumiputera*' signifies that the citizen is not indigenous. According to the Constitution, the *bumiputera* category consists of ethnic Malays and other indigenous ethnic groups in the peninsula, and the many indigenous ethnic groupings in Sabah and Sarawak. All other ethnic groups are deemed 'immigrants' and classified as non-*bumiputera*. Thus the Chinese, and the Indians, are non-*bumiputera*.

The *bumiputera*/non-*bumiputera* dichotomy has

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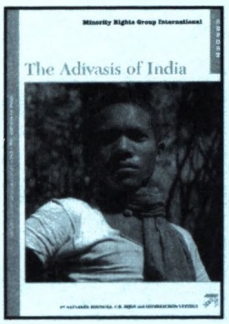

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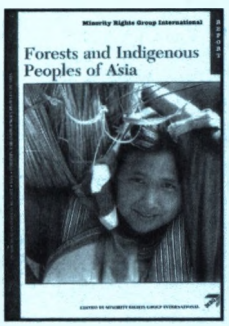

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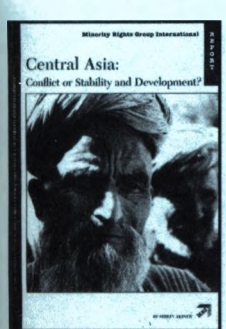

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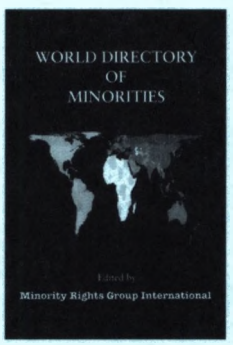

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important legal, economic and political implications. Under the Constitution, a *bumiputera* is entitled to 'special rights', meaning that the government may make special provisions to protect the economic, social and cultural interests of the *bumiputera*. Under the New Economic Policy (NEP), which ran from 1971 to 1990, and its successor, the New Development Policy (NDP), a 30 per cent quota for *bumiputera* was imposed on all economic and social spheres. The official discriminatory system was justified on the grounds that the non-*bumiputera* (read Chinese) were more commercially advanced than the *bumiputera* (read Malay). The argument was that the wealth gap, between the Malay and the Chinese would lead to political instability, especially in light of the riots between Chinese and Malays in the capital Kuala Lumpur of 13 May 1969, after the mainly Chinese opposition made impressive gains at the general elections.

The discriminatory system is also justified on the grounds that the Chinese had made a 'constitutional bargain' prior to independence. The Chinese community allegedly accepted the notion of Malay 'special rights' in exchange for citizenship based on *jus soli* (place of birth). This 'bargain', if it ever existed formally, was negotiated by the Malay and Chinese political elite without any consultation with their respective communities. Some Chinese leaders claimed that their acceptance of Malay 'special rights' was conditional on the understanding that the 'special rights' would be removed once the Malay/*bumiputera* community was on par economically with the Chinese community. The Malay elite, on the other hand, claim that acceptance of 'special rights' was forever. The problem for the Chinese community is that they cannot re-visit the issue of the 'constitutional bargain'. Under the Constitution, matters of citizenship and Malay 'special rights' cannot be questioned or discussed, even in parliament. Ethnic relations are officially deemed 'sensitive issues' and cannot be discussed openly without contravening the Sedition Act or the Internal Security Act (ISA).[12] Chinese activists and opposition politicians have been jailed or detained for questioning Malay special rights and discrimination against the Chinese community.

Ethnic politics and Malay political hegemony

All the major political parties in Malaysia are mobilized along ethnic lines. The Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition has ruled since independence, turning the country into virtually a one-party state. It claims to be a multi-ethnic coalition government, but in reality is controlled by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). UMNO's *raison d'être* is Malay nationalism, political supremacy and Islam. UMNO's political strength lies in its ability to manipulate the electoral system. More than two-thirds of the seats in Malaysia are located in the rural areas, where ethnic Malays predominate. This has ensured that UMNO (or Malays) always win the largest number of seats in elections, often slightly more than half of the seats in parliament. Since independence, all Malaysian prime ministers, deputy prime ministers and key cabinet posts have been held by UMNO. This means that the Chinese-based parties in Malaysia cannot advance Chinese interests. Even the Chinese parties in the ruling coalition, at most, can only protest quietly to UMNO about anti-Chinese policies.

UMNO cannot afford to soften its position on Malay 'special rights' because its major political opponent is the Islamic fundamentalist, Parti Islam Malaysia (PAS), that has vowed to establish an Islamic state with no political or cultural rights for non-Muslims when it comes to power. UMNO fears that any concessions to the Chinese community would mean a loss of support among its core constituents to PAS.

Employment, education and economic opportunities

The Chinese suffer discrimination in relation to employment, education and economic opportunities. The private sector is the main source of employment for almost the whole Chinese population. The public service is effectively closed to them due to the *bumiputera*-first policy. Recruitment in the public service has traditionally been set at one non-Malay (read Chinese or Indian) for every four Malay recruits. This rule, however, has never been strictly observed and anecdotal evidence suggests that the ratio is closer to one non-Malay to every ten Malay. In the upper echelons of the civil service, non-Malays definitely constitute less than 10 per cent of the elite administrative service.

The education problem centres on two issues: access to tertiary education and vernacular education. A quota system has severely restricted the entry of non-*bumiputera* into state-funded universities. Officially the intake quota for universities was set at 55 per cent *bumiputera* and 45 per cent non-*bumiputera*, but in reality, *bumiputera* students constitute more than 70 per cent of tertiary students. Every year, thousands of Chinese students are thus denied a place at university solely on the basis of their ethnicity, while many Malay students who performed much worse than Chinese students in public examinations are given a place. This has forced thousands of Chinese students to go abroad for their tertiary education, creating deep resentment due to the high costs involved. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Chinese Malaysian students consistently ranked in the top five among international students in the US, Australia and the United Kingdom. Often the cost of an overseas tertiary education has meant that a typical Chinese family could only afford to send one of its children, usually the eldest, overseas. Government scholarships are also openly biased towards the Malay. More than 95 per cent of government scholarships for overseas tertiary education are awarded to *bumiputera* students.

On top of the quota restrictions, the government established MARA (Majlis Amanah Rakyat/Council of the Indigenous Trust) institutes and colleges throughout the country. These colleges offer employment-related courses such as accountancy and only admit *bumiputera* students. In other words, Malay students who failed to get a place in the public university will still get a post-secondary edu-

cation through the MARA institutes. The costs of tuition and lodgings are met by the government.

In the mid-1990s the government decided to let foreign universities set up branches in Malaysia to give more non-*bumiputera* students access to tertiary education inside the country. This policy was not driven by the need to accommodate non-*bumiputera* needs in higher education but rather was an attempt to stop the massive outflow of funds from Chinese parents for their children's foreign education. The 50 per cent devaluation of the Malaysian currency, the *ringgit*, caused by the 1997 Asian currency crisis, helped to force the government's hand. Despite the government's motives, the setting up of private universities and other tertiary institutions has given the Chinese community more opportunities for education at the post-secondary level.

Since the arrival of Chinese migrants on a large scale during the colonial era, the community have established Chinese schools to serve the needs of their children. There is a strong belief that in order for Chinese culture to survive and flourish in Malaysia, Chinese schools are essential. Over the years, an extensive network of vernacular schools throughout the country was established.

After independence, for political reasons, the Malay language, renamed *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malaysian language), was made the official language and became the medium of teaching in all government schools. This meant that certificates from the independent Chinese and other vernacular schools were not recognized by the government. It also meant that Chinese school leavers could not apply to universities or any government-funded institutions, and they could not apply for employment in the public service, statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises. The vernacular schools are not eligible for any form of government funding and their existence depends totally on community support. The government sees them as a hindrance to national unity and assimilation.

Currently, many independent Chinese schools teach a dual curriculum to prepare their students to sit for both the government public examinations and those sanctioned by the *Dong Jiao Dong*, an umbrella group representing all Chinese schools in Malaysia. Although the government has refused to recognize any certificates issued by the Chinese schools, many universities around the world accept them as meeting matriculation requirements.

Another area of concern to the Chinese community relates to its share of the economy and opportunities for expansion. Under the NEP, the target for the Malay share of the economy was set at 30 per cent by 1990. In 1971 when the NEP was promulgated, the Malay share was estimated to be only around 2 per cent. To fast-track the Malay share, the government, first, aggressively promoted selected Malay businessmen. They were given multi-million government infrastructure contracts without going through a tender process. Second, the government discriminated in favour of *bumiputera* businessmen across the whole spectrum of the economy. *Bumiputera* businessmen were given first preference for all government projects, supply tenders and trade licences. Certain government contracts could only be awarded to *bumiputera* companies. All financial institutions had to set aside a set percentage of their loans for *bumiputera* businesses. Public listed companies and large companies were legally obliged to set aside 30 per cent of their shares for *bumiputera* investors. These shares often had to be sold at below market value simply to conform to the shareholding rule. The government's aim was to create a '*Bumiputera* Industrial and Commercial Community' that was on a par with that of the Chinese. While the aims were noble, the outcome so far has been the creation of a rentier *bumiputera* business class more interested in using the government's discriminatory policies for quick gains than in becoming genuine entrepreneurs.

While the larger Chinese business concerns can withstand the government's discriminatory policies, and in some cases thrive by using Malay fronts for their business activities, small to medium Chinese traders have been seriously hurt by the NEP and the NDP. Many believe that Chinese business would have expanded much faster if the policies had not been in place. Overall, Chinese business has suffered because of the government's bias towards Malay businesses.

Despite the restrictions, the Chinese share of the economy was estimated at 40–50 per cent at the end of the NEP in 1990. Presently, the Malay share of the economy is estimated to be in the region of 20–30 per cent. The rest is owned by foreign interests.

One area where the Chinese community was seriously hurt was employment. Large companies were required to have a minimum of 30 per cent of their staff from the *bumiputera* community. This rule was not applied in reverse. Malay companies could have a 100 per cent *bumiputera* staff. Many government-owned companies and statutory bodies have *bumiputera*-first hiring policies resulting in more than 90 per cent of their staff being *bumiputera*.

Islamization and cultural policies

Almost all Malaysian Chinese are non-Muslims while the official religion of the country is Islam. The majority of Chinese are Taoists, Confucians, Buddhists and Christians. Although religious freedom is guaranteed in the Malaysian Constitution, serious restrictions are placed on non-Islamic faiths. These include a legal ban on proselytizing to Muslims, restrictions on the building of new temples and churches and the use of certain terms deemed 'Islamic'.[13] Government policy is to promote 'Islamic values' in all areas of public life. This policy started in the 1970s but was only implemented aggressively from the 1980s onwards. An International Islamic University was established, Islamic banking and finance was introduced and the rapid expansion of Islamic schools and a mosque-building programme were generously funded by the state. A course dealing with the basics of the Islamic religion, history and culture was made a compulsory for all tertiary students, regardless of their religious affiliation, in government-funded universities.

There are state-sanctioned *Dakwah* (missionary) groups who target the Chinese for conversion to Islam. In recent years, there have been several high-profile cases of

teenage Chinese girls converting to Islam without the knowledge or consent of their parents. There are credible reports of peer pressure to convert being applied to non-Muslim students studying in local universities and government boarding schools. Controversy also surfaced in the mid-1990s when a Chinese Muslim preacher attacked the Christian religion and traditional Chinese faiths on a weekly Mandarin-language Islamic programme on state television. In Sabah and Sarawak, there were reports of indigenous peoples such as the Kadazan-Dusuns and Ibans being converted to Islam with promises of material aid or money.

Conversion to Islam is controversial in Malaysia because it implies a switch in ethnic identity. Under the Constitution, a Malay is defined as a Muslim, and therefore converting to Islam in Malaysia is often referred to as '*masuk Melayu*' (becoming a Malay). Chinese converts are not only expected to adopt a Malay name, but are also expected to cut all cultural and linguistic links with their Chinese backgrounds and there are many cases of Chinese converts who do this. Conversion to Islam is non-reversible under the law.

In 1971, the government announced a National Cultural Policy (NCP).[14] The Chinese and the non-Malay community were unaware that a NCP was being drafted, and the policy totally ignored the fact that almost half of the Malaysian population were non-Malay and non-Muslim. The NCP declared that the core of the NCP must 'reflect indigenous society' and thus only Malay and Islamic culture. This policy means that the official mass media ignore non-Malay and non-Islamic cultures. Movies that promote Christianity or any other non-Islamic faiths are banned.[15]

Prospects

In summary, the Malaysian Chinese suffer significant discrimination in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres. This is due to a deliberate government policy of discrimination in favour of the Malay and *bumiputera* community, and Islam.

Despite the gains made by the *bumiputera* in the economy, the Malay-led government is unlikely to change the system. The Malay population is so used to privilege that a subsidy mentality has developed. Many younger Malays believe that the benefits accorded to them are their birthright. The political system is also unlikely to be liberalized. The Malays know that their privileged position is tied directly to their dominance of the political system.

While the Chinese share of the economy will probably remain stable in the coming years, the Malay and government share of the economy will increase. This takes away any leverage, political or economic, the Chinese community might have in trying to extract concessions from the government. The positive side of this is that with significant Malay holdings in the economy, the Indonesian scenario, where the local people can easily blame the Chinese for any economic ills, is unlikely in Malaysia.

Another problem facing the Chinese is that their share of the population, is expected to fall to between 22–5 per cent in the coming two decades. This is because the largely urban Chinese are having fewer children as society industrializes, and because of immigration from Indonesia and the southern Philippines. Politics plays a role here as most Indonesians and Filipinos accepted for residency are ethnic Malays and Muslims.

The likely outcome is a political, social and cultural system that is dominated by the Malays and Islam. The prospects for minority rights for the Chinese in Malaysia in the long term are therefore not promising.

The Philippines

LAND AREA:	300,000 sq km
POPULATION:	72,944,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$3,380
UNDP HDI (1999):	77
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	12 July 1946
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Democratic presidential republic, president head of both state and government. Bicameral legislature.
ECONOMY:	Agriculture, with large industrial and services sectors, including tourism.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Tagalog (Pilipino; official), English (offical), many regional dialects
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Christianity, Islam, animism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Filipinos, Muslims (*Moros*), Chinese (est. less than 2%), indigenous peoples

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago consisting of more than 7,000 islands, divided into three major island groups: Luzon in the north, which includes the capital of Manila, is the largest; the island grouping in the middle, the Visayas, is the smallest; and Mindanao is in the south.

The country was named after King Philip II of Spain and the Spanish ruled the islands for nearly three centuries. Spanish rule left two indelible marks on Filipino society: the introduction of Catholicism and a land tenure system based on Spanish feudalism. The Philippines is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the only Christian nation in the whole of South-East Asia. When Spain was defeated in Cuba in 1901, the USA took over the Philippines. The early years of US rule were brutal as the government tried to suppress the nationalist movement, but later became more benign. The USA greatly expanded education and transportation, encouraged agricultural and commercial production, and started the process of decolonization. The Philippines became independent in 1946, with many of its government and social institutions based on a mixture of US and Spanish traditions.

Chinese settlements

There are no records of the first Chinese contacts with the Philippines. Accurate records only go back to the sixteenth century when the Spanish began to keep track of the Chinese traders who settled in Manila to take part in the lucrative Philippines and Mexico trade. The Chinese brought goods from China to exchange for goods from Mexico. By the 1600s, there were more than 20,000 Chinese traders resident in Manila. They were so successful acting as intermediaries in trade that the Spanish authorities began to fear them. Restrictions were placed on their entry, place of residence and the type of occupations they were allowed to engage in; high taxes were imposed on them; and they were pressured to convert to Catholicism. There were also periodic anti-Chinese campaigns, leading to anti-Chinese riots and expulsions from the Philippines. By the time the USA assumed control, the Chinese population in the Philippines was estimated at around 100,000. Although the USA also tried to restrict the Chinese, they were able to move out of Manila and enter new occupations. By the end of the war, the Chinese virtually controlled the retail trade in the Philippines.

Post independence

After independence the nationalists began to introduce anti-Chinese legislation. In 1954, laws were passed restricting retail trade to citizens, which hit the Chinese hard as virtually all were non-citizens. Later, laws were brought in to ban non-citizens from the rice and corn trade, as well as from professional fields. The Cold War also affected the Chinese community. The Philippines naturally followed the US policy of isolating communist China, and Philippine law forced all Chinese residing in the Philippines to be citizens of the anti-Communist Republic of China (Taiwan).

Change came when Marcos assumed power in the 1960s and with the rapprochement between Washington and Beijing in 1972. In preparation for the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1973, Marcos first forced all the Chinese schools in the country to convert to normal Filipino schools and, second, he made it easier for the ethnic Chinese to acquire citizenship. Many Chinese took the opportunity to become citizens, recognizing that the coming diplomatic switch from Taipei to Beijing would create difficulties.

By becoming citizens, the Chinese put themselves on equal terms with the Filipinos, and were able to move into new business areas and the professions. The Chinese business class prospered and by the early 1980s, the Chinese controlled 40–50 per cent of the economy. The richest Filipino today is Lucio Tan, an ethnic Chinese. Currently, the Chinese own and operate most of the important mainstream English newspapers and shopping malls. Many of the bigger banks in the country are also Chinese owned.

Chinese *mestizos*

No discussion of the Chinese in the Philippines is complete without looking at the Chinese *mestizos*. '*Mestizo*' is Spanish for someone of mixed parentage, with some Spanish ancestry. The first Chinese immigrants to the Philippines were almost all male. This led to relationships and marriages with Malay Filipinos. Their offspring

became 'Chinese *mestizos*', who by the nineteenth century constituted roughly 5 per cent of the population. The *mestizos* became economically prominent when the ethnic Chinese were expelled from the Philippines in the mid-eighteenth century. They took over many of the businesses previously run by the Chinese and they also moved into rural land holding and agricultural development by becoming *inquilinos* (lessees) of the large tracts of land owned by Spanish religious orders. By the late nineteenth century, as Chinese *mestizos*' land holding increased, they became a major component of the Filipino elite, and still are today. Chinese *mestizos* contributed to the formation of Filipino identity and to Filipino national identity. The Filipino national hero, José Rizal, and Emilio Aguinaldo, the first president of the self-proclaimed Philippines Republic, were both *mestizos*. Cory Aquino, who restored the country to democracy after the authoritarian rule of the Marcoses, was another prominent *mestizo*. Many of the corporate and political elite in the Philippines today are Chinese *mestizos*.

Contemporary Chinese

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of ethnic Chinese because ethnicity is not specified in census data. Estimates vary from 900,000 to 1.2 million, with general agreement that they make up less than 2 per cent of the population. More than half the Chinese live in Manila with the rest concentrated in the other major cities such as Cebu. More than 90 per cent are citizens and the overwhelming majority of Filipino Chinese, perhaps more than 90 per cent, are Hokkiens, with the Cantonese being the only other major dialect group.

There are more than 1,000 Chinese organizations, based on clan, name and hometown/region. There are about 130 Chinese schools in the country but because of Marcos's Filipinization policy, they are more Filipino in character than Chinese. Students at these schools learn Mandarin, but only to a rudimentary standard. Many of these students eventually go on to local universities, where English is the medium of instruction.

Despite the decline of Chinese fluent in Mandarin, there are five Chinese newspapers in the Philippines. They serve the needs of the older Chinese and a small number of recent arrivals from mainland China and Hong Kong.

The Chinese do not face any discrimination in practising their traditional faiths, but many younger Chinese are leaving the traditional faiths for Catholicism. Surveys suggest that close to half of the ethnic Chinese are Catholics. It is easy for the Chinese to convert to Catholicism as the religion does not conflict with the Chinese diet, customs or language.

The Chinese do face some discrimination in the political arena. Although many politicians are of Chinese mestizo background, it is still rare for an ethnic Chinese to enter the political arena successfully. There have been fewer than half a dozen ethnic Chinese legislators in the past decade. One reason for this is that the Chinese were legally barred from politics until it was made easier for them to become citizens in the 1970s. Instead, they participated indirectly through their business chambers, which have funded many successful Filipino and *mestizo* politicians. Individual Chinese tycoons also fund the electoral campaigns of presidential hopefuls, often successfully. This ensures that the Chinese community will be accorded a high degree of protection, especially in the area of legislation relating to business.

Another problem faced by the Chinese is the popular perception that all Chinese are commercially successful and wealthy. This has led to a series of kidnappings of children of ethnic Chinese businessmen from the mid-1990s onwards. There were 66 kidnappings for ransom in the first 8 months of 1998, involving 118 Chinese victims. A total of over US$2 million (91.7 million pesos) was paid as ransom. In most cases, the kidnappings go unreported, because many Chinese families believe that those involved in the kidnappings are members of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The division between the ethnic Chinese and the *mestizo* Chinese is more a matter of perception than a reality. Many of the younger ethnic Chinese, while proud of their Chinese heritage, see themselves as Filipino first. They are more comfortable speaking Tagalog than Mandarin or a Chinese dialect. In fact, many do not speak or understand Mandarin. Their command of their dialect may be just slightly better. The younger generation are also increasingly marrying out of the community. This younger generation is likely to be more politically active and successful in politics.

The Chinese community has coined the term *Tsinoy* to describe themselves in recent years. *Tsinoy* is an amalgam of *Tsino*, for Chinese and *Pinoy*, a popular term for Filipino. This term represents the new generation of Chinese Filipinos who want to be fully integrated with Filipino society. An important organization that promotes this is the Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran, which is made up of mostly middle-class Chinese Filipinos. It is active in the Manila area, and has its own building which doubles as a heritage centre for the Chinese community in the Philippines. It is supported by some of the biggest Chinese business concerns, and the older associations and clan groups. Kaisa's main aim is to project the Chinese community as an integral part of the Philippines, and in this it can be judged to have been relatively successful.

The Chinese in the Philippines, in many ways, represent a story of a Chinese minority being accepted by the local majority. The *Tsinoys* are wholly accepted as part of Filipino society. They play a leading role in society and face no barriers to expressing their culture and language.

Singapore

LAND AREA:	618 sq km
POPULATION:	3,476,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$27,740
UNDP HDI (1999):	22
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	9 August 1965
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Parliamentary republic. Head of state is president with reserve powers elected by direct popular vote. Head of government is prime minister. Unicameral legislature. Political system widely seen as soft authoritarian.
ECONOMY:	Industry (textiles, electronics, oil refining), plus commerce and services.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Four official languages: Bahasa Melayu, English (language of government, education and commerce), Chinese-Mandarin and Tamil. Also Chinese dialects, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Telegu, Malayalam
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Sikhism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Chinese (est. 77%), Malays, Indians

The Republic of Singapore is the only state in the region where the Chinese constitute a majority, numerically and politically. It is government policy to maintain 77 per cent of the population as ethnic Chinese. In recent years this has meant immigration from China and Hong Kong.

Singapore was founded as an *entrepôt* by the British in the early nineteenth century and it has flourished since. Its location, in the middle of South-East Asia and the major waterways, ensured its status as a major trading port. It achieved self-government as part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Differences with the Malay leadership (see section on Malaysia) led to Singapore becoming independent two years later. Since independence it has been ruled by People's Action Party (PAP), a soft authoritarian but economically efficient regime. Singapore is the only fully industrialized country in the region with a higher per capita income than the former colonial power, the United Kingdom, and other western countries such as New Zealand and Australia.

The language minorities

Since the Chinese are politically dominant, they are not discriminated against. There is a tension, however, between the English-educated and Mandarin-educated Chinese population. The political and administrative elite since independence, led by Lee Kuan Yew and now Goh Chok Tong, were all English-educated, while the majority of the Chinese population were Mandarin-educated. The English-educated elite has made English the *lingua franca* of the tiny island, and it is generally acknowledged that all the top positions in society are occupied by them. The government's bias towards the English-educated was motivated by the need to make Singapore competitive economically in the international arena, and because the opposition to PAP was mostly Mandarin-educated.

In the early 1980s, the Mandarin-educated began to vote against the government, fearing that bias towards the English-educated would mean a loss of the Chinese culture and language in the long term. They were unhappy because the English-educated were generally earning more and formed the bulk of the middle class. The Mandarin-educated saw themselves as the new underclass. The government responded by making Mandarin compulsory for Chinese students, encouraging bilingualism and 'Speak Mandarin' campaigns. The Mandarin-educated however, were sceptical about the genuineness of the government's motives. A more likely explanation for the shift in government policy, in addition to winning back the votes of the Mandarin-educated, was fears that the English-educated were 'westernizing' Singaporean society. This would not only mean a loss of the Chinese heritage but, more importantly, would lead to calls for greater political freedom in this authoritarian state.

In the future, the gulf between the English- and Mandarin-educated is likely to narrow as the younger generation becomes bilingual due to the education policy and the older generation of monolingual Chinese dies out.

Thailand

LAND AREA:	513,115 sq km
POPULATION:	60,300,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$6,020
UNDP HDI (1999):	67
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	—
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	Parliamentary democracy. Head of state is king while head of government is prime minister. Bicameral legislature.
ECONOMY:	Agriculture-based, with growing industrial and service sectors (including tourism).
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Thai or Siamese (official), Chinese, Malay, minority languages with Tibeto-Burman, Mon-Khmer and Miao-yao roots
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism (official), Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Taoism, animism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Thai, Chinese (est. 10%), Malays, Khmer, Indians, Vietnamese, indigenous hill people

The Chinese population in the Kingdom of Thailand is estimated to be no more than 10 per cent of the country's 60 million people. The Chinese are well integrated with Thai society and do not face any overt discrimination.

Thailand, once known as Siam, was a voluntary vassal state of China from the thirteenth century. Thai royalty profited handsomely from trade with China and, by the late seventeenth century, there were about 10,000 Chinese traders living in Thailand. The Thai king at this time, Taksin, was half-Chinese (his Chinese name was Chao The Sin), his father being a Teochiu. Taksin reunited Thailand after a Burmese invasion in 1767 and later founded Bangkok, largely with Chinese workers and traders. By the 1900s, almost half the city's population was Chinese. The Chinese gained a strong hold on the economy as several Thai kings granted them trade monopolies in return for a share of the business. This mutually beneficial relationship gave the Chinese control over the whole trading network, especially in rice. Intermarriage was common.

By the early twentieth century, the rise of Thai nationalism meant that curbs were put on the Chinese. In 1913, a new Thai Nationality Law stated that anyone born in Siam was Thai regardless of their ethnicity. In 1932 a military coup ended the absolute rule of the monarchy. Several laws were passed in the 1930s and 1940s aimed at assimilating the Chinese into Thai society. The Thais were worried that the upheaval in mainland China would spread to the Chinese community in Thailand so links with the mainland and Taiwan were discouraged and the Chinese were told to take out Thai citizenship to protect their commercial enterprises. Chinese schools and newspapers were shut down. Despite these curbs, Chinese businesses actually expanded throughout the period when Thailand was under a succession of military rulers and bankrolled many of them in return for protection of their businesses.

By the early 1970s, many of the country's biggest conglomerates were Chinese-owned. The Chinese dominate publishing, manufacturing, import and export, and construction and banking. By now it was hard to distinguish who was Chinese as many Chinese and children of Chinese/Thai marriages saw themselves as Thai first. They also took Thai names, although they kept their Chinese names to be used amongst themselves or with Chinese business colleagues overseas. The Chinese had little problem in integrating – Thai Buddhism, customs, food and culture required few lifestyle changes of them, unlike Islamic culture in other parts of the region.

As Thailand moved towards democracy in the 1990s, many Sino-Thais began to enter the political arena. Today, about one-third of Thailand's legislators are Sino-Thai, including several former prime ministers and the current prime minister, Chuan Leekpai. Many Thai political parties and legislators rely on Chinese business money to fund their campaigns.

In the 1990s, the Thai economy is booming (despite the regional downturn of 1997–8) and this, has led to a resurgence of the Thai Chinese community. Chinese serials dubbed in Thai regularly feature on Thai television, and enrolments in Mandarin classes have greatly increased. Many Sino-Thai and Thai are studying Mandarin because of the perceived advantage it will bring in trade, especially with the emerging market in China. The Thai Chinese Chamber of Commerce and various Chinese associations also report a resurgence in their activities. Chinese dailies are widely available and Chinese culture can be openly displayed.

Teochius form the bulk of the Chinese in Thailand today, comprising about 40 per cent of the Chinese population, followed by Hainanese, Hakkas, Hokkiens and Cantonese. By and large, the younger Thai Chinese do not speak their dialects, preferring to use Thai as their first language. Those with Chinese education use Mandarin for business. The older generation still use dialect among themselves. Although there are no schools using Mandarin as the medium of instruction, some schools supported by the community teach Mandarin as an optional subject.

The Chinese in Thailand are widely accepted as part of the Thai population and their close connection to political power means that it is highly unlikely that the Thai Chinese will face marginalization in the foreseeable future.

Vietnam

LAND AREA:	331,689 sq km
POPULATION:	77,562,000
PER CAPITA GDP (1999):	US$1,755
UNDP HDI (1999):	110
INDEPENDENCE DAY:	2 September 1945 – made effective 1954 under Geneva Agreement, Vietnam divided into two states (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and South (Republic of Vietnam). Reunited as Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1975.
CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS:	President is head of state while prime minister is head of government. Single chamber national assembly. Executive power exercised by council of ministers. Single-party state.
ECONOMY:	Agriculture, expanding industrial and services sectors.
MAIN LANGUAGES:	Vietnamese (official), Hao (Chinese), Khmer, Tai, Hmong
MAIN RELIGIONS:	Buddhism, Christianity, indigenous syncretic religions, animism
ETHNIC GROUPS:	Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese (est. 1.5 %), indigenous groups

China dominated Vietnam from the earliest times and left an indelible mark on Vietnamese culture, language and society. Due to its geographical proximity, many Chinese moved into Vietnam. Between 1923 and 1951, it was estimated that there were about 1.2 million arrivals from China. Despite the long association between these two countries, who share a common border, Vietnamese history is one of constant wars to resist incorporation into the Chinese empire and the Vietnamese harbour deep animosity towards the Chinese. Although many of Vietnamese dynasties were Sino-Vietnamese in origin, they tried to control the flow of Chinese migrants, for fear of being overwhelmed.

Many Chinese who settled in Vietnam remained a community apart. As a distinct minority, they are officially called *Hoa*. Intermarriage increased after reunification in 1975, however, and the offspring of such intermarriages refer to themselves as *Kinh* (Vietnamese).

The present borders of Vietnam were defined by French military action between 1858 and 1883. Except for a period of Japanese occupation during the Second World War, French colonial rule continued until their defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The French organized the Chinese according to the *congrégation* system, i.e. every Chinese was grouped by their dialect or place of origin. There were five *congrégations*: Cantonese, Teochius, Hakkas, Hokkiens and Hainanese. Each *congrégation* had a leader who reported directly to the French authorities. He was responsible for the conduct of his *congrégation*, collected taxes and acted as the intermediary between the French and the Chinese.

After independence, Vietnam was partitioned into the US-backed Republic of Vietnam (South) and the Chinese- and Soviet-backed Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North). In the South, the government tried to assimilate the Chinese by declaring that all Chinese born in the country were Vietnamese and were required to adopt Vietnamese names. Those who refused were considered aliens and barred from certain trades and professions. Many Chinese simply became citizens and expanded their business. By 1975, according to official data, the Chinese controlled 100 per cent of the wholesale trade, 50 per cent of the retail trade, 70 per cent of the foreign trade and 80 per cent of industry.

In the North, Beijing and Hanoi reached an agreement in 1955 which in essence gave citizenship rights to all Chinese living there. The communist state did not allow private enterprise, so most Chinese in the North worked as fishermen, labourers and workers, although Chinese small businesses survived until 1978.

The reunification of Vietnam

In 1975, the USA withdrew from South Vietnam after suffering defeat by the North. The new regime set about creating a socialist economy by outlawing all private enterprises. Wealthy Chinese (and Vietnamese) were arrested and had their properties confiscated. Most of the Chinese in the South were denied citizenship and all Chinese schools were closed down. The new regime started the 'anti-*comprador* bourgeoisie' campaigns aimed at eradicating all vestiges of capitalism in the country, which affected the Chinese more than any other group as they were the business class.

The situation worsened for the Chinese when relations between China and Vietnam soured after 1978 with Beijing's support for the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, which was openly hostile to Vietnam. The Vietnamese accused Beijing of using the Chinese in Vietnam as a 'fifth column'. On 30 April 1978 an official announcement from Beijing said more than 40,000 Chinese in the North had crossed the border back to China permanently. By the year's end this figure had increased to 200,000. In the South, the Chinese began to depart by sea in large numbers when it was clear that they were no longer welcome in the country. The 'boat people', as they were subsequently called, numbered about a quarter of a million. About 10 per cent perished at sea.

In February 1979, Chinese troops crossed the border in the North to 'teach a lesson' to the Vietnamese after the latter invaded Cambodia. This triggered an official mass expulsion of all ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, about half a million Chinese left Vietnam in the period 1975-9.

The Chinese Vietnamese who moved into China have settled on the Chinese side of the border without difficulty. These Chinese, with their knowledge of the Vietnamese language, have benefited from rapidly increasing

cross-border trade. The 'boat people', on the other hand, were not so fortunate.

Initially, some Western countries, notably Australia, took in a significant number for resettlement on humanitarian grounds. The US took a fairly large number, but most were former employees of the US-backed South Vietnam government, or people who had supported the US. The sheer number of boat people caused many Western countries to shut their doors to new refugees. They feared that allowing even genuine refugees in would encourage others to take the perilous journey by sea. From the 1980s onwards, all Western governments regarded the boat people as economic refugees and thus ineligible for resettlement. Those who wanted to resettle in a third country had to have financial resources or specialized skills. An agreement with Hanoi meant that most were forcibly repatriated to Vietnam from camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand. A very small number remained in Hong Kong.

From a population of about 1.3 million in 1976, the mass exodus shrank the community to about 935,000 in 1979. By 1989, this had increased to about 961,000 or about 1.5 per cent of the population.

Contemporary Vietnam

In 1986, with the economy on the verge of collapse, the government embarked on an economic restructuring programme called *Doi Moi*. This entails removing state control over the economy and promoting the market economy. The leadership turned to the Chinese who were actively encouraged to take part in the programme. In 1989, laws were passed guaranteeing private ownership of business and properties. This led to active participation by the Chinese in restructuring the economy. A survey of private businesses in Ho Chi Minh City in 1992 revealed that 45 per cent of them were owned by ethnic Chinese.

Most of the larger private firms that concentrate on the export market are owned by Vietnamese Chinese in partnership with the Chinese from the wider region. There are also many cases of 'returned refugees' – Chinese Vietnamese who left as boat people, settled the US and Australia, and who are now coming back to reinvest in Vietnam as 'foreigners'.

The liberal economic policies have also extended, to some degree, to the social sphere. Chinese-language schools and Chinese associations, banned before, are now permitted. Many of the students are Vietnamese who believe that learning Mandarin will lead to better job opportunities. No figures exist for these schools and associations but there are thousands. A Chinese newspaper has reappeared on the streets, down from 22 in 1965.

The Chinese in Vietnam today live mostly in the urban centres and show no interest in politics, choosing, as their forebears did, to concentrate on business. The largest dialect group is the Cantonese, who make up about half of all the Chinese in country, followed by Teochiu, Hokkien, Hainanese and Hakka.

By the mid-1990s, Vietnam was widely hailed as one of 'tiger cub' industrialized countries in the region. The Chinese have reasserted their dominance in the economy and this has re-awakened old fears of Chinese domination. There are periodic calls by communist hardliners in the ruling party to restrict the market economy and Chinese businesses, which so far have been ignored by the leadership. As Vietnam becomes more dependent on global trade, it will be more difficult for the hardliners to target the Chinese as this might cause an economic downturn. This does not mean that the political leaders will not pass laws that restrict or hinder the further growth of Chinese business.

Conclusions

The pattern of Chinese migration and settlement in South-East Asia has led to their dominating the economies of the region. In every country, the Chinese business class holds a share of the economy disproportionate to their percentage of the population. During the colonial era, the authorities controlled the Chinese by placing restrictions on trade, occupation and place of residence. Some colonial authorities allowed the Chinese to dominate trade as long as they served the needs of the big businesses, which were often owned by Europeans. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the colonial authorities brought the Chinese in to act as intermediaries instead of creating an indigenous business class. The legacy of this was the creation of an entrepreneurial gulf between the local people and the Chinese.

The underdevelopment of a local business class is often cited by post-independence political leaders as a justification for restricting the growth of Chinese businesses. Measures were passed favouring local traders. Countries which pursued assimilationist policies decided that the best way to control the Chinese business class was to naturalize the Chinese as citizens.

However, while the entrepreneur class in most of these countries is of Chinese origin, within individual Chinese communities these entrepreneurs constitute a small minority. Many Chinese people in the region are no better off than the local people. Those in power in the region, however, often formulate policies towards the Chinese and other minorities based on their observations and interactions with the Chinese business elite. In some countries, the local political elite rely on money from the Chinese business elite for election campaigns and other political activities. Thus the behaviour and thinking of the small Chinese business elite in the countries surveyed are seen by policy makers as the mainstream thinking of the Chinese minority in their countries.

Political stability and economic prosperity

Understanding of the Chinese communities and their position in individual economies is crucial given that the political, cultural and social rights of the minority Chinese are often tied directly to the economy. Since many of the countries in the region restrict, formally or informally, the active participation of Chinese in the political arena, the Chinese are forced to remain focused on the economy. Their political bargaining position to ensure that their rights are protected is therefore tied directly to their involvement in the economy.

There appears to be a direct link between political stability, economic prosperity and the level of discrimination faced by the Chinese. Economic stability goes hand in hand with political stability. Generally speaking, the higher the level of political stability and economic prosperity, the lower the level of discrimination against the Chinese and other minorities, and vice versa.

Examples are not hard to come by: the anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia in 1998 were largely the result of the collapse of the Indonesian economy, during which the Chinese were used as scapegoats. The collapse of the *rupiah* caused political instability which led to the resignation of the dictator Suharto. The inter-ethnic riots in Malaysia in 1969 arose largely from political instability – occurring only hours after the opposition had won a large number of seats in a general election – as well as from resentment arising from Chinese economic success.

In the same way, when an economy prospers the level of discrimination faced by ordinary Chinese appears to be reduced. During the economic boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Malaysian government relaxed many of its official restrictions against Chinese business and cultural activities. During the last decade of Suharto's rule in Indonesia, resentment against the Chinese dominance of the economy was kept under control simply because the *pribumi* knew that the economic cake was getting larger, and thus their share would increase as well. The military junta in Burma and the communist government in Vietnam have relaxed their attitudes towards their Chinese communities as they are seen to be the key to continued economic growth and progress.

When the economy falters, on the other hand, the Chinese are often scapegoated by nationalists or the local political elite. The 1998 anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia were a clear manifestation of this. When the *rupiah* collapsed, the political elite covered up their own mistakes and corruption by pointing their finger at the Chinese.

Another problem associated with the Chinese dominance of the economies is that it often reinforced the stereotyping and envy among the local political and business leadership. Malaysia's NEP was an attempt to rectify this imbalance by forcing a redistribution of corporate wealth from Chinese business into *bumiputera* businesses. This policy, however, has led to a worsening of ethnic relations among the younger generation, and further reinforced inter-ethnic boundaries.

A key factor determining the behaviour of the local elite towards the Chinese minority was the pattern of interaction with the local population prior to independence. In countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, the high level of intermarriage ensures that, for the most part, the children of these marriages were accepted as locals. The acceptance of mixed Chinese often reduces suspicion of the remaining Chinese. Religion plays a significant role here. In Islamic domains such as Indonesia, interaction was often hindered by the reluctance of the Chinese to convert to Islam, as this would mean a drastic

change to their diets and cultural habits. This was not the case for Chinese who converted to Buddhism, which predominated in mainland South-East Asia.

The crucial factor affecting the Chinese after independence was the political policies pursued by the local political elite. Decisions were made by both Chinese and locals along a spectrum from assimilation to accommodation /integration. Assimilation meant the ethnic majority accepting the Chinese as full citizens, with the proviso that they adopt majority culture and norms. Most Chinese who took this route did so for practical reasons: they knew they could not go back to China nor resettle in a third country. Many Chinese businesses took this route in order to circumvent business regulations aimed at restricting foreigners. Assimilation has occurred in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam; while in Thailand it has been relatively successful, in Indonesia and Vietnam, it has not.

In some countries, notably Malaysia, where accommodation between the ethnic majority and the Chinese was seen as the best approach, governments introduced laws making distinctions between indigenous and non-indigenous citizens. The result of such policies has been to reinforce ethnic divisions and create a sense of 'second-class' citizenship among the non-indigenous citizens, principally the Chinese. The Philippines is the country that has most successfully promoted integration between the majority population and the Chinese minority. While the Chinese were discriminated against during the Spanish and US eras, and the early years of independence, in recent times the political elite has accepted the Chinese as part of Filipino society.

Prospects

If the key determinant in the prospects for the Chinese communities in the region is the economy, the countries where the Chinese minorities are likely to be most at risk in the coming years are Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Burma.

Anti-Chinese riots could erupt again in Indonesia if the economy does not improve significantly. The pivotal economic position of the Chinese makes them easy scapegoats if political mismanagement makes the economy falter again. The Indonesian economy is structurally weak due to mismanagement during the Suharto years, and it will take some time to mend. While political stability has been restored to some extent by the free election of a new president late in 1999, this alone cannot guarantee continuing peaceful development.

In Malaysia, pro-ethnic-Malay discriminatory policies are likely to stay in place for the foreseeable future. This encourages rent-seeking behaviour among Malays, which can be absorbed by the political system only as long as there is rapid economic growth. But as Malaysia industrializes further and competes on the world market, the distortions caused by these policies may well be unsustainable. The 1997 Asian currency crisis caused deep ethnic tensions when the country went into recession.

In the longer term, Malaysia will no longer be able to enjoy the double-digit growth rates seen in the 1980s and early 1990s, and then it is likely that the country will no longer be able to subsidize ethnic Malays. As long as the Malaysian Constitution makes a clear distinction between the indigenous and the non-indigenous (Chinese and Indians), the government can pursue discriminatory policies openly and legally. By preventing discussion of ethnic relations and tightly controlling public discussion of topics it deems 'sensitive', the government prevents Chinese and other minorities openly influencing or changing the system. For such changes to occur, the Malay political elite will need to give its consent, which at present is difficult to envisage.

In Brunei, the situation for the Chinese is straightforward. Petroleum, the mainstay of the economy, will run out in the next century and the royal family could well fall from power. The small Chinese community will be at risk if the likely political transition does not run smoothly.

In Vietnam, long-standing animosity towards the Chinese may break out again if *Doi Moi* does not bring economic prosperity to the majority of the population. The reassertion of the Chinese influence since economic reform began has been accompanied by a rekindling of fears of Chinese economic domination. Political instability, brought about either by economic failure or the fall of the communist regime, may lead to Chinese being scapegoated.

The military regime in Burma faces the same dilemma as the Vietnamese communists. The opening up of their economy has allowed the Chinese to take a larger role in the economy. If and when the military junta falls, the new rulers will need to ensure that Chinese businesses active under the military junta are not singled out for unjust retribution.

The Chinese in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines and Singapore are unlikely to face significant levels of discrimination or risks in the coming years.

Human rights and political participation

In many South-East Asian countries the concept of minority rights is given little attention. Attitudes of governing elites to broader human rights as internationally understood tend to be negative. Those in power do not usually recognize the rights of minorities, fearing – or claiming – that accepting minority rights will hamper the nation-building process. With the exception of Thailand, the countries became truly independent only after the Second World War and place a priority on 'nation-building'. Rulers of countries with large diverse ethnic groups, such as Indonesia and Burma, have argued that recognizing minority rights may lead to the disintegration of the nation, and often equate minority aspirations with calls for separation and independence.

Most South-East Asian political leaders continue to consider human rights – especially political rights – a luxury that can only be established once a country is fully developed or industrialized. They say that providing employment, housing, education, political stability, and law and order override individual or collective minority rights during early stages of modernization and develop-

ment. They claim that the rights of the community as a whole are paramount and they usually define 'community' in terms of the largest ethnic group in the country.

This view, however is, not universal in official circles. Indonesia's own Human Rights Commission, a government body, has in recent years shown itself capable of independent action, and its chair was appointed to the new government in October 1999. In addition, traditional opposition to human rights by elites, justified on the basis that they are foreign to 'Asian values', is challenged by a growing number of human rights organizations, scholars, journalists and other civil society actors in these countries.[16] In Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, for example, a growing body of organizations and individuals reject the view that recognizing minority rights and individual human rights poses a threat to nation building. They argue that governments should recognize minority and broader human rights for the longer-term well-being of the state and society and assert that this is a prerequisite for a modern democratic state. The problem remains that the state often does not recognize the role of NGOs, seeing them as part of the political opposition. In countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam, and in Indonesia before the fall of Suharto, NGOs faced official hostility when they raised issues of human rights.

In all the countries surveyed, discrimination against the Chinese community and other minorities is essentially political. If the state, or rather those in power, were to recognize the political rights of minorities, then many of the causes of concern would disappear. Countries that have put up barriers (both informal and formal) against meaningful political participation by the Chinese in the past include Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The region's most notable exception is Singapore, which has a Chinese majority. Of the rest, Thailand and the Philippines have gone the furthest in removing barriers to Chinese participation in the political process, while Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia have to some extent opened up the political process. In Brunei, Burma, Malaysia and Vietnam, very significant barriers remain to Chinese political participation.[17]

International law and the impact of globalization

Despite the reluctance of South-East Asian governments to recognize human/minority rights, the increasing interdependence among countries around the world means that international conventions and treaties will play more and more of a key role. As members of the UN, all the countries discussed in this report can be understood to have accepted the principle of the universality of human rights, and this principle can serve as a means to protect and advance the rights of Chinese and other minorities. The three strongest and most broadly applicable international instruments for the protection of minorities are the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1965) and the two International Covenants of 1966 on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

By adhering to any one of these treaties, a country agrees to engage in a dialogue with the relevant treaty body. It assumes a legal obligation to submit periodic 'state reports' outlining the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures taken to ensure that its population enjoys the rights contained in the treaty. State reports are usually examined in the presence of representatives of the government concerned. Sometimes a special UN investigator is assigned to look into specific cases of abuses. Governments that have acceded do tend to take their obligations under the treaties seriously.

With the exception of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam, South-East Asian governments have not, by and large, signed up to these three key instruments of international law (see Table 1).

Even countries that have ratified the conventions, such

Table 1

Treaty / *Country*	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination	International Convenant on Civil and Political Rights	International Convenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Brunei	No	No	No
Burma / Myanmar	No	No	No
Cambodia	Yes (EIF: 28/12/86)	Yes (26/08/92)	Yes (26/08/92)
Indonesia	Yes (25/07/99)	No	No
Laos	Yes (24/03/74)	No	No
Malaysia	No	No	No
Philippines	Yes (04/01/69)	Yes (23/01/87)*	Yes (03/01/76)
Singapore	No	No	No
Thailand	No	Yes (29/01/97)*	No
Vietnam	Yes (09/07/82)	Yes (24/12/82)*	Yes (24/12/82)*

Notes: EIF: Entry into force date. * With reservations – the state has opted out of certain parts of the treaty. Source: compiled from UNHCR website 1999.

as the Philippines and Vietnam, have expressed reservations. Cambodia's acceding to all three instruments was mainly due to the successful UN brokering of a peace treaty in 1991 and the subsequent UN-supervised elections.

With the exception of Vietnam, the other countries where the Chinese are at risk – Brunei, Burma, Indonesia and Malaysia – are also those that have not acceded to two or more of these international instruments. Brunei, Malaysia and Burma have not signed *any* of the three. Indonesia only signed ICERD in 1999, largely as a result of international pressure following the anti-Chinese riots of May 1998.

Pressure on the governments concerned to accede to these three all-important international human rights instruments, applied both from within – through the non-governmental sector, for example – and externally, offers possibilities for setting norms more favourable to the protection of minority rights. For the state itself, there is a prospect – if a distant one – of enhanced internal political stability and better relations with other members of the international community.

One factor that is likely to contribute to the progressive enjoyment of minority rights by the Chinese of South-East Asia, as of other minority groups around the world, is 'globalization': the trend towards increasing economic, technical and cultural interdependency among states and societies. The 'global village' phenomenon now has a major impact upon the region via new information technology such as the Internet and satellite television broadcasts. Societies in South-East Asia are no longer cut off from each other or from the rest of the world. Overt discrimination against minorities, including physical attacks, become swiftly known. The first that the world knew of the organized gang-rapes of Chinese women in Indonesia in 1998, for example, was through an e-mail sent by a young Chinese woman in Jakarta. No government enjoys negative publicity. In this new environment states are likely to be more cautious in dealing with minorities than previously. Moreover, the sharing of experiences and information throughout South-East Asia and beyond seems likely to give increasing strength to regional solidarity and mutual encouragement, as well as offering practical help for activists who often work in hostile conditions.

Recommendations

South-East Asian governments

1 The governments of Brunei, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand should accede to and ratify all three key international conventions offering minority rights protection – the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD 1965) and the International Covenants (1966) on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – as soon as possible. Governments that undertake to do so will gain a greater degree of legitimacy and respect in the international and national arenas.

2 Governments in the region should undertake domestic institution- and capacity-building in the area of human rights and intercommunity relations. For instance, government security forces should be trained in the respect of human rights, including the rights of minority groups, and in the respect of different cultures in accomplishing their professional duties. Moreover, public institutions, such as the judiciary, should be strengthened and ensured full independence and impartiality, to ensure that violations of human and minority rights do not remain unpunished.

3 Governments should respect and protect the rights of minority and human rights activists to defend human and minority rights.

4 Governments should appoint independent and impartial legal experts, and request technical assistance from appropriate intergovernmental bodies, to identify discriminatory domestic legislation and regulations and to work towards alternative, inclusive approaches to the management of multicultural societies. All discriminatory domestic instruments should be repealed.

5 Governments should undertake public education and information campaigns to promote respect for, and positive valuation of, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity among their populations. They should promote wider appreciation of the contribution that ethnic Chinese have made to national and regional development, and foster dialogue and cooperation between Chinese and other ethnic groups, including majority populations. Education systems, the media, public information services, and commercial and cross-cultural associations can be used to project positive images of minority cultures and contributions to national life.

Non-governmental and external actors

6 South-East Asian human rights organizations and civil society actors should promote public understanding of ICERD, the two International Covenants and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Declaration on Minorities, 1992). They should promote understanding of the mechanisms available to Chinese and other minorities under these instruments to remedy grievances.

7 International organizations and international and in-country NGOs should provide technical assistance to governments with framing anti-discrimination legislation, establishing such mechanisms as human rights commissions and undertaking other legal and institutional reforms. International NGOs and intergovernmental organizations should support South-East Asian human rights defenders in seeking constructive dialogue with their governments about accession to, and domestic implementation of, international instruments and mechanisms for the promotion of minority rights and about institutional and legal reforms to address outstanding minority rights issues. Where necessary, appropriately targeted training in international human rights and minority rights standards and mechanisms for governmental and non-governmental actors should be jointly developed.

8 Chinese and other minorities in the region should be supported internationally and domestically in their efforts to seek opportunities to participate more fully in domestic political life. Minority groups' representatives and NGOs should be supported in their efforts to use the available domestic and international mechanisms for reporting abuses of, and seeking redress for, their minority rights.

NOTES

1 Asian Human Rights Commission, *Our Common Humanity: Asian Human Rights Charter – A Peoples' Charter*, published on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kowloon, Hong Hong: Asian Legal Resource Centre, 1998), article 6.2.

2. Country entries are arranged alphabetically, unlike in MRG's 1992 report of the same name, where a division was followed between ASEAN states and Indo-China. Since 1998 all the countries featured in this text have belonged to ASEAN.

3. See, e.g., Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations, *Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life* (The Hague, 1999).

4. Sources used for statistical summaries at start of country entries: MRG (ed.), *The Chinese of South-East Asia*, London, 1992; MRG (ed.), *World Directory of Minorities*, London 1997; www.un.org; www.undp.org; www.unhcr.org; Instituto del Tercer Mundo and New Internationalist Publications, *The World Guide 1999/2000: A View from the South*, Oxford, 1999. Statistical summaries compiled for MGR by Ms Nisha Haji.

   Per capita GDP is based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP based on World Bank ratios) and takes into account price differences between countries for a more accurate measure of national wealth. These figures are from *Aisaweek*, vol. 25, no. 50, 17 Dec. 1999.

5. Although Myanmar is the official name used by the current military regime, MRG believes that the majority of the Burmese population reject both the name itself and the government's claim that the term is more inclusive of all the different ethnic groups in the country.

6. MRG and the author are especially grateful to Mr Martin Smith for his suggestions regarding this section of the text.

7. 'Burman' is generally used to refer to the majority ethnic group and 'Burmese' to citizenship or language; i.e. someone can be an ethnic Chinese or Karen but a Burmese citizen.

8. Some historians consider that Chinese migration began significantly before this date.

9. Indonesia's independence was declared in 1945, recognized by the Dutch only in 1949, with world recognition accorded in 1950.

10. Some commentators put the number of casualties among the Chinese at tens of thousands rather than hundreds of thousands.

11. Angkatan Bersenjata Republic Indonesia (the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia), now Tentera Nasional Indonesia (TNI, Indonesian National Army).

12. The ISA allows for detention without trial for actions deemed a threat to 'national security'. This all-encompassing term allows the government to detain just about anybody.

13. For example, churches were told that they cannot use the term 'Allah' to refer to God, as 'Allah' refers to the Islamic God. This has led to some Indonesian-language bibles, which use the word Allah, being impounded on arrival in Malaysia. The Indonesian language is virtually identical to Bahasa Malaysia.

14. The NCP was revised in the 1980s.

15. The most recent example was the banning of the cartoon movie, *Prince of Egypt*, because, according to the government, the movie promoted 'Christianity'.

16. See for example *Our Common Humanity: Asian Human Rights Charter – A Peoples' Charter*, published on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and available from the Asian Legal Resource Center, Kowloon, and Hong Kong. (www.hk.super.net/~ahrchk).

17. While Malaysia allows the Chinese to participate openly and even join the government as a coalition partner, as stated in the country survey, genuine political power lies in the hands of Malays, and meaningful Chinese political participation is arguably non-existent.

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The Chinese in South-East Asia

It is more than 1,500 years since Chinese merchants first set sail for South-East Asia, establishing trading communities all over the region. In the nineteenth century, many more Chinese came to work in the mines and on the plantations established by the colonial powers. Now there are around 25 million ethnic Chinese in South-East Asia, one of the world's most significant diasporas.

In some countries of the region, Chinese and host communities have integrated successfully. In others they have been denied citizenship, forced to assimilate, their language and religion have been proscribed and they have been discriminated against in education and employment. Some governments have tolerated or instigated violent anti-Chinese racism and, in times of economic, political or social turmoil, the Chinese have served as scapegoats. The anti-Chinese rioting, rapes and killings in Indonesia in May 1998 are the most recent appalling case of this.

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